

JEWISH LITERATURE

AND

OTHER ESSAYS

BY
GUSTAV KARPELES



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PREFACE

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The following essays were delivered during the last ten years, in the form of addresses, before the largest associations in the great cities of Germany. Each one is a dear and precious possession to me. As I once more pass them in review, reminiscences fill my mind of solemn occasions and impressive scenes, of excellent men and charming women. I feel as though I were sending the best beloved children of my fancy out into the world, and sadness seizes me when I realize that they no longer belong to me alone—that they have become the property of strangers. The living word falling upon the ear of the listener is one thing; quite another the word staring from the cold, printed page. Will my thoughts be accorded the same friendly welcome that greeted them when first they were uttered?

17 N 17 B 2 i Brith
I venture to hope that they may be kindly received; for these addresses were born of devoted love to Judaism. The consciousness that Israel is charged with a great historical mission, not yet accomplished, ushered them into existence. Truth and sincerity stood sponsor to every word. Is it

presumptuous, then, to hope that they may find favor in the New World? Brethren of my faith live there as here; our ancient watchword, "Sh'ma Yisrael," resounds in their synagogues as in ours; the old blood-stained flag, with its sublime inscription, "The Lord is my banner!" floats over them; and Jewish hearts in America are loyal like ours, and sustained by steadfast faith in the Messianic time when our hopes and ideals, our aims and dreams, will be realized. There is but one Judaism the world over, by the Jordan and the Tagus as by the Vistula and the Mississippi. God bless and protect it, and lead it to the goal of its glorious future!

To all Jewish hearts beyond the ocean, in free America, fraternal greetings!

GUSTAV KARPELES

BERLIN, Pesach $\frac{5652}{1892}$.

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A GLANCE AT JEWISH LITERATURE

In a well-known passage of the *Romanzero*, rebuking Jewish women for their ignorance of the magnificent golden age of their nation's poetry, Heine used unmeasured terms of condemnation. He was too severe, for the sources from which he drew his own information were of a purely scientific character, necessarily unintelligible to the ordinary reader. The first truly popular presentation of the whole of Jewish literature was made only a few years ago, and could not have existed in Heine's time, as the most valuable treasures of that literature, a veritable Hebrew Pompeii, have been unearthed from the mould and rubbish of the libraries within this century. Investigations of the history of Jewish literature have been possible, then, only during the last fifty years.

But in the course of this half-century, conscientious research has so actively been prosecuted that we can now gain at least a bird's-eye view of the whole course of our literature. Some stretches still lie in shadow, and it is not astonishing that eminent scholars continue to maintain that "there is no such thing as an organic history, a logical development, of the gigantic neo-Hebraic literature"; while such as are acquainted with the results of late

research at best concede that Hebrew literature has been permitted to garner a "tender aftermath." Both verdicts are untrue and unfair. Jewish literature has developed organically, and in the course of its evolution it has had its spring-tide as well as its season of decay, this again followed by vigorous rejuvenescence.

Such opinions are part and parcel of the vicissitudes of our literature, in themselves sufficient matter for an interesting book. Strange it certainly is that a people without a home, without a land, living under repression and persecution, could produce so great a literature; stranger still, that it should at first have been preserved and disseminated, then forgotten, or treated with the disdain of prejudice, and finally roused from torpid slumber into robust life by the breath of the modern era. In the neighborhood of twenty-two thousand works are known to us now. Fifty years ago bibliographers were ignorant of the existence of half of these, and in the libraries of Italy, England, and Germany an untold number awaits resurrection.

In fact, our literature has not yet been given a name that recommends itself to universal acceptance. Some have called it "Rabbinical Literature," because during the middle ages every Jew of learning bore the title Rabbi; others, "Neo-Hebraic"; and a third party considers it purely theological. These names are all inadequate. Perhaps the only one sufficiently comprehensive is "Jewish Literature." That embraces, as it should, the aggregate

of writings produced by Jews from the earliest days of their history up to the present time, regardless of form, of language, and, in the middle ages at least, of subject-matter.

With this definition in mind, we are able to sketch the whole course of our literature, though in the frame of an essay only in outline. We shall learn, as Leopold Zunz, the Humboldt of Jewish science, well says, that it is "intimately bound up with the culture of the ancient world, with the origin and development of Christianity, and with the scientific endeavors of the middle ages. Inasmuch as it shares the intellectual aspirations of the past and the present, their conflicts and their reverses, it is supplementary to general literature. Its peculiar features, themselves falling under universal laws, are in turn helpful in the interpretation of general characteristics. If the aggregate results of mankind's intellectual activity can be likened unto a sea, Jewish literature is one of the tributaries that feed it. Like other literatures and like literature in general, it reveals to the student what noble ideals the soul of man has cherished, and striven to realize, and discloses the varied achievements of man's intellectual powers. If we of to-day are the witnesses and the offspring of an eternal, creative principle, then, in turn, the present is but the beginning of a future, that is, the translation of knowledge into life. Spiritual ideals consciously held by any portion of mankind lend freedom to thought, grace to feeling, and by sailing up this one stream we may reach the

fountain-head whence have emanated all spiritual forces, and about which, as a fixed pole, all spiritual currents eddy.”¹

The cornerstone of this Jewish literature is the Bible, or what we call Old Testament literature—the oldest and at the same time the most important of Jewish writings. It extends over the period ending with the second century before the common era; is written, for the most part, in Hebrew, and is the clearest and the most faithful reflection of the original characteristics of the Jewish people. This biblical literature has engaged the closest attention of all nations and every age. Until the seventeenth century, biblical science was purely dogmatic, and only since Herder pointed the way have its æsthetic elements been dwelt upon along with, often in defiance of, dogmatic considerations. Up to this time, Ernest Meier and Theodor Nöldeke have been the only ones to treat of the Old Testament with reference to its place in the history of literature.

Despite the dogmatic air clinging to the critical introductions to the study of the Old Testament, their authors have not shrunk from treating the book sacred to two religions with childish arbitrariness. Since the days of Spinoza’s essay at rationalistic explanation, Bible criticism has been the wrestling-ground of the most extravagant exegesis, of bold hypotheses, and hazardous conjectures. No Latin or Greek classic has been so ruthlessly attacked and dissected; no mediæval poetry so arbi-

¹ Zunz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, I., 42.

trarily interpreted. As a natural consequence, the æsthetic elements were more and more pushed into the background. Only recently have we begun to ridicule this craze for hypotheses, and returned to more sober methods of inquiry. Bible criticism reached the climax of absurdity, and the scorn was just which greeted one of the most important works of the critical school, Hitzig's "Explanation of the Psalms." A reviewer said: "We may entertain the fond hope that, in a second edition of this clever writer's commentary, he will be in the enviable position to tell us the day and the hour when each psalm was composed." ✓

The reaction began a few years ago with the recognition of the inadequacy of Astruc's document hypothesis, until then the creed of all Bible critics. Astruc, a celebrated French physician, in 1753 advanced the theory that the Pentateuch—the five books of Moses—consists of two parallel documents, called respectively Yahvistic and Elohistic, from the name applied to God in each. On this basis, German science after him raised a superstructure. No date was deemed too late to be assigned to the composition of the Pentateuch. If the historian Flavius Josephus had not existed, and if Jesus had not spoken of "the Law" and "the prophets," and of the things "which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms," critics would have been disposed to transfer the redaction of the Bible to some period of the Christian era. So wide is the divergence of opinions on the subject that

two learned critics, Ewald and Hitzig, differ in the date assigned to a certain biblical passage by no less than a thousand years!

Bible archæology, Bible exegesis, and discussions of grammatical niceties, were confounded with the history of biblical literature, and naturally it was the latter that suffered by the lack of differentiation. Orthodoxy assumed a purely divine origin for the Bible, while sceptics treated the holy book with greater levity than they would dare display in criticising a modern novel. The one party raised a hue and cry when Moses was spoken of as the first author; the other discovered "obscene, rude, even cannibalistic traits"¹ in the sublime narratives of the Bible. It should be the task of coming generations, successors by one remove of credulous Bible lovers, and immediate heirs of thorough-going rationalists, to reconcile and fuse in a higher conception of the Bible the two divergent theories of its purely divine and its purely human origin. Unfortunately, it must be admitted that Ernest Meier is right, when he says, in his "History of the National Poetry of the Hebrews," that this task wholly belongs to the future; at present it is an unsolved problem.

The æsthetic is the only proper point of view for a full recognition of the value of biblical literature. It certainly does not rob the sacred Scriptures, the perennial source of spiritual comfort, of their exalted character and divine worth to assume that legend,

¹ G. Scherr, *Allgemeine Geschichte der Litteratur*, I., p. 62.

myth, and history have combined to produce the perfect harmony which is their imperishable distinction. The peasant dwelling on inaccessible mountain-heights, next to the record of Abraham's shepherd life, inscribes the main events of his own career, the anniversary dates sacred to his family. The young count among their first impressions that of "the brown folio," and more vividly than all else remember

"The maidens fair and true,
The sages and the heroes bold,
Whose tale by seers inspired
In our Book of books is told.

The simple life and faith
Of patriarchs of ancient day
Like angels hover near,
And guard, and lead them on the way."¹

Above all, a whole nation has for centuries been living with, and only by virtue of, this book. Surely this is abundant testimony to the undying value of the great work, in which the simplest shepherd tales and the naïvest legends, profound moral saws and magnificent images, the ideals of a Messianic future and the purest, the most humane conception of life, alternate with sublime descriptions of nature and the sweet strains of love-poems, with national songs breathing hope, or trembling with anguish, and with the dull tones of despairing pessimism and the divinely inspired hymns of an exalted theodicy—

¹ F. Freiligrath, *Die Bilderbibel*.

all blending to form what the reverential love of men has named the Book of books.

It was natural that a book of this kind should become the basis of a great literature. Whatever was produced in later times had to submit to be judged by its exalted standard. It became the rule of conduct, the prophetic mirror reflecting the future work of a nation whose fate was inextricably bound up with its own. It is not known how and when the biblical scriptures were welded into one book, a holy canon, but it is probably correct to assume that it was done by the *Soferim*, the Scribes, between 200 and 150 B. C. E. At all events, it is certain that the three divisions of the Bible—the Pentateuch, the Prophets, and the miscellaneous writings—were contained in the Greek version, the Septuagint, so called from the seventy or seventy-two Alexandrians supposed to have done the work of translation under Ptolemy Philadelphus.

The Greek translation of the Bible marks the beginning of the second period of Jewish literature, the Judæo-Hellenic. Hebrew ceased to be the language of the people; it was thenceforth used only by scholars and in divine worship. Jewish for the first time met Greek intellect. Shem and Japheth embraced fraternally. "But even while the teachings of Hellas were pushing their way into subjugated Palestine, seducing Jewish philosophy to apostasy, and seeking, by main force, to introduce paganism, the Greek philosophers themselves stood awed by the majesty and power of the Jewish pro-

phets. Swords and words entered the lists as champions of Judaism. The vernacular Aramæan, having suffered the Greek to put its impress upon many of its substantives, refused to yield to the influence of the Greek verb, and, in the end, Hebrew truth, in the guise of the teachings of Jesus, undermined the proud structure of the heathen." This is a most excellent characterization of that literary period, which lasted about three centuries, ending between 100 and 150 C. E. Its influence upon Jewish literature can scarcely be said to have been enduring. To it belong all the apocryphal writings which, originally composed in the Greek language, were for that reason not incorporated into the Holy Canon. The centre of intellectual life was no longer in Palestine, but at Alexandria in Egypt, where three hundred thousand Jews were then living, and thus this literature came to be called Judæo-Alexandrian. It includes among its writers the last of the Neoplatonists, particularly Philo, the originator of the allegorical interpretation of the Bible and of a Jewish philosophy of religion; Aristéas, and pseudo-Phokylides. There were also Jewish *littérateurs*: the dramatist Ezekielos; Jason; Philo the Elder; Aristobulus, the popularizer of the Aristotelian philosophy; Eupolemos, the historian; and probably the Jewish Sybil, who had to have recourse to the oracular manner of the pagans to proclaim the truths of Judaism, and to Greek figures of speech for her apocalyptic visions, which foretold, in biblical phrase and with prophetic ardor, the future of Israel and of the nations in contact with it.

Meanwhile the word of the Bible was steadily gaining importance in Palestine. To search into and expound the sacred text had become the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob, of those that had not lent ear to the siren notes of Hellenism. Midrash, as the investigations of the commentators were called, by and by divided into two streams—Halacha, which establishes and systematizes the statutes of the Law, and Haggada, which uses the sacred texts for homiletic, historical, ethical, and pedagogic discussions. The latter is the poetic, the former, the legislative, element in the Talmudic writings, whose composition, extending over a thousand years, constitutes the third, the most momentous, period of Jewish literature. Of course, none of these periods can be so sharply defined as a rapid survey might lead one to suppose. For instance, on the threshold of this third epoch stands the figure of Flavius Josephus, the famous Jewish historian, who, at once an enthusiastic Jew and a friend of the Romans, writes the story of his nation in the Greek language—a character as peculiar as his age, which, listening to the mocking laughter of a Lucian, saw Olympus overthrown and its gods dethroned, the Temple at Jerusalem pass away in flame and smoke, and the new doctrine of the son of the carpenter at Nazareth begin its victorious course.

By the side of this Janus-faced historian, the heroes of the Talmud stand enveloped in glory. We meet with men like Hillel and Shammaï, Jochanan ben Zakkaï, Gamaliel, Joshua ben Chananya, the

famous Akiba, and later on Yehuda the Prince, friend of the imperial philosopher Marcus Aurelius, and compiler of the Mishna, the authoritative code of laws superseding all other collections. Then there are the fabulist Meïr; Simon ben Yochaï, falsely accused of the authorship of the mystical Kabbala; Chiya; Rab; Samuel, equally famous as a physician and a rabbi; Jochanan, the supposed compiler of the Jerusalem Talmud; and Ashi and Abina, the former probably the arranger of the Babylonian Talmud. This latter Talmud, the one invested with authority among Jews, by reason of its varying fortunes, is the most marvellous literary monument extant. Never has book been so hated and so persecuted, so misjudged and so despised, on the other hand, so prized and so honored, and, above all, so imperfectly understood, as this very Talmud.

For the Jews and their literature it has had untold significance. That the Talmud has been the conservator of Judaism is an irrefutable statement. It is true that the study of the Talmud unduly absorbed the great intellectual force of its adherents, and brought about a somewhat one-sided mental development in the Jews; but it also is true, as a writer says,¹ that "whenever in troublous times scientific inquiry was laid low; whenever, for any reason, the Jew was excluded from participation in public life, the study of the Talmud maintained the elasticity and the vigor of the Jewish mind, and

¹ D. Cassel, *Lehrbuch der jüdischen Geschichte und Literatur*, p. 198.

rescued the Jew from sterile mysticism and spiritual apathy. The Talmud, as a rule, has been inimical to mysticism, and the most brilliant Talmudists, in propitious days, have achieved distinguished success in secular science. The Jew survived ages of bitterness, all the while clinging loyally to his faith in the midst of hostility, and the first ray of light that penetrated the walls of the Ghetto found him ready to take part in the intellectual work of his time. This admirable elasticity of mind he owes, first and foremost, to the study of the Talmud."

From this much abused Talmud, as from its contemporary the Midrash in the restricted sense, sprouted forth the blossoms of the Haggada—that Haggada

"Where the beauteous, ancient sagas,
Angel legends fraught with meaning,
Martyrs' silent sacrifices,
Festal songs and wisdom's sayings,
Trope and allegoric fancies—
All, howe'er by faith's triumphant
Glow pervaded—where they gleaming,
Glist'ning, well in strength exhaustless.

And the boyish heart responsive
Drinks the wild, fantastic sweetness,
Greets the woful, wondrous anguish,
Yields to grewsome charm of myst'ry,

Hid in blessed worlds of fable.
Overawed it hearkens solemn
To that sacred revelation
Mortal man hath poetry called."¹

¹ Heine, *Romanzero*, *Jehuda ben Halevy*.

A story from the Midrash charmingly characterizes the relation between Halacha and Haggada. Two rabbis, Chiya bar Abba, a Halachist, and Abbahu, a Haggadist, happened to be lecturing in the same town. Abbahu, the Haggadist, was always listened to by great crowds, while Chiya, with his Halacha, stood practically deserted. The Haggadist comforted the disappointed teacher with a parable. "Let us suppose two merchants," he said, "to come to town, and offer wares for sale. The one has pearls and precious gems to display, the other, cheap finery, gilt chains, rings, and gaudy ribbons. About whose booth, think you, does the crowd press?—Formerly, when the struggle for existence was not fierce and inevitable, men had leisure and desire for the profound teachings of the Law; now they need the cheering words of consolation and hope."

For more than a thousand years this nameless spirit of national poesy was abroad, and produced manifold works, which, in the course of time, were gathered together into comprehensive collections, variously named Midrash Rabba, Pesikta, Tan-chuma, etc. Their compilation was begun in about 700 C. E., that is, soon after the close of the Talmud, in the transition period from the third epoch of Jewish literature to the fourth, the golden age, which lasted from the ninth to the fifteenth century, and, according to the law of human products, shows a season of growth, blossom, and decay.

The scene of action during this period was west-

ern Asia, northern Africa, sometimes Italy and France, but chiefly Spain, where Arabic culture, destined to influence Jewish thought to an incalculable degree, was at that time at its zenith. "A second time the Jews were drawn into the vortex of a foreign civilization, and two hundred years after Mohammed, Jews in Kairwan and Bagdad were speaking the same language, Arabic. A language once again became the mediatrix between Jewish and general literature, and the best minds of the two races, by means of the language, reciprocally influenced each other. Jews, as they once had written Greek for their brethren, now wrote Arabic; and, as in Hellenistic times, the civilization of the dominant race, both in its original features and in its adaptations from foreign sources, was reflected in that of the Jews." It would be interesting to analyze this important process of assimilation, but we can concern ourselves only with the works of the Jewish intellect. Again we meet, at the threshold of the period, a characteristic figure, the thinker Sa'adia, ranking high as author and religious philosopher, known also as a grammarian and a poet. He is followed by Sherira, to whom we owe the beginnings of a history of Talmudic literature, and his son Haï Gaon, a strictly orthodox teacher of the Law. In their wake come troops of physicians, theologians, lexicographers, Talmudists, and grammarians. Great is the circle of our national literature: it embraces theology, philosophy, exegesis, grammar, poetry, and jurisprudence, yea, even astronomy and chro-

nology, mathematics and medicine. But these widely varying subjects constitute only one class, inasmuch as they all are infused with the spirit of Judaism, and subordinate themselves to its demands. A mention of the prominent actors would turn this whole essay into a dry list of names. Therefore it is better for us merely to sketch the period in outline, dwelling only on its greatest poets and philosophers, the moulders of its character.

The opinion is current that the Semitic race lacks the philosophic faculty. Yet it cannot be denied that Jews were the first to carry Greek philosophy to Europe, teaching and developing it there before its dissemination by celebrated Arabs. In their zeal to harmonize philosophy with their religion, and in the lesser endeavor to defend traditional Judaism against the polemic attacks of a new sect, the Karaites, they invested the Aristotelian system with peculiar features, making it, as it were, their national philosophy. At all events, it must be universally accepted that the Jews share with the Arabs the merit "of having cherished the study of philosophy during centuries of barbarism, and of having for a long time exerted a civilizing influence upon Europe."

The meagre achievements of the Jews in the departments of history and history of literature do not justify the conclusion that they are wanting in historic perception. The lack of writings on these subjects is traceable to the sufferings and persecutions that have marked their pathway. Before their

chroniclers had time to record past afflictions, new sorrows and troubles broke in upon them. In the middle ages, the history of Jewish literature is the entire history of the Jewish people, its course outlined by blood and watered by rivers of tears, at whose source the genius of Jewish poetry sits lamenting. "The Orient dwells an exile in the Occident," Franz Delitzsch, the first alien to give loving study to this literature, poetically says, "and its tears of longing for home are the fountain-head of Jewish poetry."¹

That poetry reached its perfection in the works of the celebrated trio, Solomon Gabirol, Yehuda Halevi, and Moses ben Ezra. Their dazzling triumphs had been heralded by the more modest achievements of Abitur, writing Hebrew, and Adia and the poetess Xemona (Kasmune) using Arabic, to sing the praise of God and lament the woes of Israel.

The predominant, but not exclusive, characteristic of Jewish poetry is its religious strain. Great thinkers, men equipped with philosophic training, and at the same time endowed with poetic gifts, have contributed to the huge volume of synagogue poetry, whose subjects are praise of the Lord and regret for Zion. The sorrow for our lost fatherland has never taken on more glowing colors, never been expressed in fuller tones than in this poetry. As ancient Hebrew poetry flowed in the two streams of prophecy and psalmody, so the Jewish poetry of the middle ages was divided into *Piut* and *Selicha*.

¹ F. Delitzsch, *Zur Geschichte der jüdischen Poesie*, p. 165.

Songs of hope and despair, cries of revenge, exhortations to peace among men, elegies on every single persecution, and laments for Zion, follow each other in kaleidoscopic succession. Unfortunately, there never was lack of historic matter for this poetry to elaborate. To furnish that was the well-accomplished task of rulers and priests in the middle ages, alike "in the realm of the Islamic king of kings and in that of the apostolic servant of servants." So fate made this poetry classical and eminently national. Those characteristics which, in general literature, earn for a work the description "Homeric," in Jewish literature make a liturgical poem "Kaliric," so called from the poet Eliezer Kalir, the subject of many mythical tales, and the first of a long line of poets, Spanish, French, and German, extending to the sixteenth or seventeenth century. The literary history of this epoch has been written by Leopold Zunz with warmth of feeling and stupendous learning. He closes his work with the hope that mankind, at some future day, will adopt Israel's religious poetry as its own, transforming the elegiac *Selicha* into a joyous psalm of universal peace and good-will.

Side by side with religious flourishes secular poetry, clothing itself in rhyme and metre, adopting every current form of poesy, and treating of every appropriate subject. Its first votary was Solomon Gabirol, that

"Human nightingale that warbled
Forth her songs of tender love,

In the darkness of the sombre,
Gothic mediæval night.

She, that nightingale, sang only,
Sobbing forth her adoration,
To her Lord, her God, in heaven,
Whom her songs of praise extolled."¹

Solomon Gabirol may be said to have been the first poet thrilled by *Weltschmerz*. "He produced hymns and songs, penitential prayers, psalms, and threnodies, filled with hope and longing for a blessed future. They are marked throughout by austere earnestness, brushing away, in its rigor, the color and bloom of life; but side by side with it, surging forth from the deepest recesses of a human soul, is humble adoration of God."

Gabirol was a distinguished philosopher besides. In 1150, his chief work, "The Fount of Life," was translated into Latin by Archdeacon Dominicus Gundisalvi, with the help of Johannes Avendeath, an apostate Jew, the author's name being corrupted into Avencebrol, later becoming Avicebron. The work was made a text-book of scholastic philosophy, but neither Scotists nor Thomists, neither adherents nor detractors, suspected that a heretical Jew was slumbering under the name Avicebron. It remained for an inquirer of our own day, Solomon Munk, to reveal the face of Gabirol under the mask of a garbled name. Amazed, we behold that the pessimistic philosopher of to-day can as little as the

¹ Heine, *l. c.*

schoolmen of the middle ages shake himself free from the despised Jew. Schopenhauer may object as he will, it is certain that Gabirol was his predecessor by more than eight hundred years!

Charisi, whom we shall presently meet, has expressed the verdict on his poetry which still holds good: "Solomon Gabirol pleases to call himself the small—yet before him all the great must dwindle and fall.—Who can like him with mighty speech appall?—Compared with him the poets of his time are without power—he, the small, alone is a tower.—The highest round of poetry's ladder has he won.—Wisdom fondled him, eloquence hath called him son—and clothing him with purple, said: 'Lo!—my first-born son, go forth, to conquest go!'—His predecessors' songs are naught with his compared—nor have his many followers better fared.—The later singers by him were taught—the heirs they are of his poetic thought.—But still he's king, to him all praise belongs—for Solomon's is the Song of Songs."

By Gabirol's side stands Yehuda Halevi, probably the only Jewish poet known to the reader of general literature, to whom his name, life, and fate have become familiar through Heinrich Heine's *Romanzero*. His magnificent descriptions of nature "reflect southern skies, verdant meadows, deep blue rivers, and the stormy sea," and his erotic lyrics are chaste and tender. He sounds the praise of wine, youth, and happiness, and extols the charms of his lady-love, but above and beyond all he devotes his song to Zion and his people. The pearl of his poems

"Is the famous lamentation
Sung in all the tents of Jacob,
Scattered wide upon the earth . . .

Yea, it is the song of Zion,
Which Yehuda ben Halevy,
Dying on the holy ruins,
Sang of loved Jerusalem."¹

"In the whole compass of religious poetry, Milton's and Klopstock's not excepted, nothing can be found to surpass the elegy of Zion," says a modern writer, a non-Jew.² This soul-stirring "Lay of Zion," better than any number of critical dissertations, will give the reader a clear insight into the character and spirit of Jewish poetry in general:

O Zion ! of thine exiles' peace take thought,
The remnant of thy flock, who thine have sought !
From west, from east, from north and south resounds,
Afar and now anear, from all thy bounds,
And no surcease,
"With thee be peace !"

In longing's fetters chained I greet thee, too,
My tears fast welling forth like Hermon's dew—
O bliss could they but drop on holy hills !
A croaking bird I turn, when through me thrills
Thy desolate state ; but when I dream anon,
The Lord brings back thy ev'ry captive son—
A harp straightway
To sing thy lay.

¹ Heine, *l. c.*

² M. J. Schleiden, *Die Bedeutung der Juden für die Erhaltung der Wissenschaften im Mittelalter*, p. 37.

In heart I dwell where once thy purest son
At Bethel and Peniel, triumphs won ;
God's awesome presence there was close to thee,
Whose doors thy Maker, by divine decree,
 Opposed as mates
 To heaven's gates.

Nor sun, nor moon, nor stars had need to be ;
God's countenance alone illumined thee
On whose elect He poured his spirit out.
In thee would I my soul pour forth devout !
Thou wert the kingdom's seat, of God the throne,
And now there dwells a slave race, not thine own,
 In royal state,
 Where reigned thy great.

O would that I could roam o'er ev'ry place
Where God to missioned prophets showed His grace !
And who will give me wings ? An off'ring meet,
I'd haste to lay upon thy shattered seat,
 Thy counterpart—
 My bruised heart.

Upon thy precious ground I'd fall prostrate,
Thy stones caress, the dust within thy gate,
And happiness it were in awe to stand
At Hebron's graves, the treasures of thy land,
And greet thy woods, thy vine-clad slopes, thy vales,
Greet Abarim and Hor, whose light ne'er pales,
 A radiant crown,
 Thy priests' renown.

Thy air is balm for souls ; like myrrh thy sand ;
With honey run the rivers of thy land.
Though bare my feet, my heart's delight I'd count
To thread my way all o'er thy desert mount,
 Where once rose tall
 Thy holy hall,

Where stood thy treasure-ark, in recess dim,
Close-curtained, guarded o'er by cherubim.
My Naz'rite's crown would I pluck off, and cast
It gladly forth. With curses would I blast
The impious time thy people, diadem-crowned,
Thy Nazirites, did pass, by en'mies bound
 With hatred's bands,
 In unclean lands.

By dogs thy lusty lions are brutal torn
And dragged; thy strong, young eaglets, heav'nward
 borne,
By foul-mouthed ravens snatched, and all undone.
Can food still tempt my taste? Can light of sun
 Seem fair to shine
 To eyes like mine?

Soft, soft! Leave off a while, O cup of pain!
My loins are weighted down, my heart and brain,
With bitterness from thee. Whene'er I think
Of Oholah,¹ proud northern queen, I drink
Thy wrath, and when my Oholivah forlorn
Comes back to mind—'tis then I quaff thy scorn,
 Then, draught of pain,
 Thy lees I drain.

O Zion! Crown of grace! Thy comeliness
Hath ever favor won and fond caress.
Thy faithful lovers' lives are bound in thine;
They joy in thy security, but pine
 And weep in gloom
 O'er thy sad doom.

¹ Ezek. xxiii. 4. [Tr.]

From out the prisoner's cell they sigh for thee,
And each in prayer, wherever he may be,
Towards thy demolished portals turns. Exiled,
Dispersed from mount to hill, thy flock defiled
Hath not forgot thy sheltering fold. They grasp
Thy garment's hem, and trustful, eager, clasp,
 With outstretched arms,
 Thy branching palms.

Shinar, Pathros—can they in majesty
With thee compare? Or their idolatry
With thy Urim and thy Thummim august?
Who can surpass thy priests, thy saintly just,
 Thy prophets bold,
 And bards of old?

The heathen kingdoms change and wholly cease—
Thy might alone stands firm without decrease,
Thy Nazirites from age to age abide,
Thy God in thee desireth to reside.
Then happy he who maketh choice of thee
To dwell within thy courts, and waits to see,
 And toils to make,
 Thy light awake.

On him shall as the morning break thy light,
The bliss of thy elect shall glad his sight,
In thy felicities shall he rejoice,
In triumph sweet exult, with jubilant voice,
 O'er thee, adored,
 To youth restored.

We have loitered long with Yehuda Halevi, and
still not long enough, for we have not yet spoken of
his claims to the title philosopher, won for him by
his book *Al-Chasari*. But now we must hurry on

to Moses ben Ezra, the last and most worldly of the three great poets. He devotes his genius to his patrons, to wine, his faithless mistress, and to "bachchanalian feasts under leafy canopies, with merry minstrelsy of birds." He laments over separation from friends and kin, weeps over the shortness of life and the rapid approach of hoary age—all in polished language, sometimes, however, lacking euphony. Even when he strikes his lyre in praise and honor of his people Israel, he fails to rise to the lofty heights attained by his mates in song.

With Yehuda Charisi, at the beginning of the thirteenth century, the period of the epigones sets in for Spanish-Jewish literature. In Charisi's *Tachkemoni*, an imitation of the poetry of the Arab Hariri, jest and serious criticism, joy and grief, the sublime and the trivial, follow each other like tints in a parti-colored skein. His distinction is the ease with which he plays upon the Hebrew language, not the most pliable of instruments. In general, Jewish poets and philosophers have manipulated that language with surprising dexterity. Songs, hymns, elegies, penitential prayers, exhortations, and religious meditations, generation after generation, were couched in the idiom of the psalmist, yet the structure of the language underwent no change. "The development of the neo-Hebraic idiom from the ancient Hebrew," a distinguished modern ethnographer justly says, "confirms, by linguistic evidence, the plasticity, the logical acumen, the comprehensive and at the same time versatile intellectuality of

the Jewish race. By the ingenious compounding of words, by investing old expressions with new meanings, and adapting the material offered by alien or related languages to its own purposes, it has increased and enriched a comparatively meagre treasury of words."¹

Side by side with this cosmopolitanism, illustrated in the Haggada, whose pages prove that nothing human is strange to the Jewish race, it reveals, in its literary development, as notably in the Halacha, a sharply defined subjectivity. Jellinek says: "Not losing itself in the contemplation of the phenomena of life, not devoting itself to any subject unless it be with an ulterior purpose, but seeing all things in their relation to itself, and subordinating them to its own boldly asserted *ego*, the Jewish race is not inclined to apply its powers to the solution of intricate philosophic problems, or to abstruse metaphysical speculations. It is, therefore, not a philosophic race, and its participation in the philosophic work of the world dates only from its contact with the Greeks." The same author, on the other hand, emphasizes the liberality, the broad sympathies, of the Jewish race, in his statement that the Jewish mind, at its first meeting with Arabic philosophy, absorbed it as a leaven into its intellectual life. The product of the assimilation was—as early as the twelfth century, mark you—a philosophic conception of life, whose broad liberality culminates in the sentiment expressed by two most eminent thinkers:

¹ Ad. Jellinek, *Der jüdische Stamm*, p. 195.

Christianity and Islam are the precursors of a world-religion, the preliminary conditions for the great religious system satisfying all men. Yehuda Halevi and Moses Maimonides were the philosophers bold enough to utter this thought of far-reaching significance.

The second efflorescence of Jewish poetry brings forth exotic romances, satires, verbose hymns, and humorous narrative poems. Such productions certainly do not justify the application of the epithet "theological" to Jewish literature. Solomon ben Sakbel composes a satiric romance in the *Makamat*¹ form, describing the varied adventures of Asher ben Yehuda, another Don Quixote; Berachya Hanakdan puts into Hebrew the fables of Aesop and Lokman, furnishing La Fontaine with some of his material; Abraham ibn Sahl receives from the Arabs, certainly not noted for liberality, ten goldpieces for each of his love-songs; Santob de Carrion is a beloved Spanish bard, bold enough to tell unpleasant truths unto a king; Joseph ibn Sabara writes a humorous romance; Yehuda Sabbataï, epic satires, "The War of Wealth and Wisdom," and "A Gift from a Misogynist," and unnamed authors, "Truth's Campaign," and "Praise of Women."

¹ "Makama (plural, *Makamat*), the Arabic word for a place where people congregate to discuss public affairs, came to be used as the name of a form of poetry midway between the epic and the drama." (Karpeles, *Geschichte der jüdischen Literatur*, vol. II., p. 693.) The most famous Arabic poet of *Makamat* was Hariri of Bassora, and the most famous Jewish, Yehuda Charisi. See above, p. 32, and p. 211 [Tr.]

A satirist of more than ordinary gifts was the Italian Kalonymos, whose "Touchstone," like Ibn Chasdai's Makamat, "The Prince and the Dervish," has been translated into German. Contemporaneous with them was Süsskind von Trimberg, the Suabian minnesinger, and Samson Pnie, of Strassburg, who helped the German poets continue *Parzival*, while later on, in Italy, Moses Rieti composed "The Paradise" in Hebrew *terza-rima*.

In the decadence of Jewish literature, the most prominent figure is Immanuel ben Solomon, or Manoello, as the Italians call him. Critics think him the precursor of Boccaccio, and history knows him as the friend of Dante, whose *Divina Commedia* he travestied in Hebrew. The author of the first Hebrew sonnet and of the first Hebrew novel, he was a talented writer, but as frivolous as talented.

This is the development of Jewish poetry during its great period. In other departments of literature, in philosophy, in theology, in ethics, in Bible exegesis, the race is equally prolific in minds of the first order. Glancing back for a moment, our eye is arrested by Moses Maimonides, the great systematizer of the Jewish Law, and the connecting link between scholasticism and the Greek-Arabic development of the Aristotelian system. Before his time Bechaï ibn Pakuda and Joseph ibn Zadik had entered upon theosophic speculations with the object of harmonizing Arabic and Greek philosophy, and in the age immediately preceding that of Maimonides, Abraham ibn Daud, a writer of surprisingly liberal

views, had undertaken, in "The Highest Faith," the task of reconciling faith with philosophy. At the same time rationalistic Bible exegesis was begun by Abraham ibn Ezra, an acute but reckless controversialist. Orthodox interpretations of the Bible had, before him, been taught in France by Rashi (Solomon Yitschaki) and Samuel ben Meïr, and continued by German rabbis, who, at the same time, were preachers of morality—a noteworthy phenomenon in a persecuted tribe. "How pure and strong its ethical principles were is shown by its religious poetry as well as by its practical Law. What pervades the poetry as a high ideal, in the application of the Law becomes demonstrable reality. The wrapt enthusiasm in the hymns of Samuel the Pious and other poets is embodied, lives, in the rulings of Yehuda Hakohen, Solomon Yitschaki, and Jacob ben Meïr; in the legal opinions of Isaac ben Abraham, Eliezer ha-Levi, Isaac ben Moses, Meïr ben Baruch, and their successors, and in the codices of Eliezer of Metz and Moses de Coucy. A German professor¹ of a hundred years ago, after glancing through some few Jewish writings, exclaimed, in a tone of condescending approval: 'Christians of that time could scarcely have been expected to enjoin such high moral principles as this Jew wrote down and bequeathed to his brethren in faith!'"

Jewish literature in this and the next period consists largely of theological discussions and of commentaries on the Talmud produced by the hundred.

¹ Hirt, *Bibliothek*, V., p. 43.

It would be idle to name even the most prominent authors; their works belong to the history of theological science, and rarely had a determining influence upon the development of genuine literature.

We must also pass over in silence the numerous Jewish physicians and medical writers; but it must be remembered that they, too, belong to Jewish literature. The most marvellous characteristic of this literature is that in it the Jewish race has registered each step of its development. "All things learned, gathered, obtained, on its journeyings hither and thither—Greek philosophy and Arabic, as well as Latin scholasticism—all deposited themselves in layers about the Bible, so stamping later Jewish literature with an individuality that gave it an unique place among the literatures of the world."

The travellers, however, must be mentioned by name. Their itineraries were wholly dedicated to the interests of their co-religionists. The first of the line is Eldad, the narrator of a sort of Hebrew Odyssey. Benjamin of Tudela and Petachya of Ratisbon are deserving of more confidence as veracious chroniclers, and their descriptions, together with Charisi's, complete the Jewish library of travels of those early days, unless, with Steinschneider, we consider, as we truly may, the majority of Jewish authors under this head. For Jewish writers a hard, necessitous lot has ever been a storm wind, tossing them hither and thither, and blowing the seeds of knowledge over all lands. Withal learning proved an enveloping, protecting cloak to these mendicant

and pilgrim authors. The dispersion of the Jews, their international commerce, and the desire to maintain their academies, stimulated a love for travel, made frequent journeyings a necessity, indeed. In this way only can we account for the extraordinarily rapid spread of Jewish literature in the middle ages. The student of those times often chances across a rabbi, who this day teaches, lectures, writes in Candia, to-morrow in Rome, next year in Prague or Cracow, and so Jewish literature is the "wandering Jew" among the world's literatures.

The fourth period, the Augustan age of our literature, closes with a jarring discord—the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, their second home, in which they had seen ministers, princes, professors, and poets rise from their ranks. The scene of literary activity changes: France, Italy, but chiefly the Slavonic East, are pushed into the foreground. It is not a salutary change; it ushers in three centuries of decay and stagnation in literary endeavor. The sum of the efforts is indicated by the name of the period, the Rabbinical, for its chief work was the development and fixation of Rabbinism.

Decadence did not set in immediately. Certain beneficent forces, either continuing in action from the former period, or arising out of the new concatenation of circumstances, were in operation: Jewish exiles from Spain carried their culture to the asylums hospitably offered them in the Orient and a few of the European countries, notably Holland; the art of printing was spreading, the first presses in

Italy bringing out Jewish works; and the sun of humanism and of the Reformation was rising and shedding solitary rays of its effulgence on the Jewish minds then at work.

Among the noteworthy authors standing between the two periods and belonging to both, the most prominent is Nachmanides, a pious and learned Bible scholar. With logical force and critical candor he entered into the great conflict between science and faith, then dividing the Jewish world into two camps, with Maimonides' works as their shibboleth. The Aristotelian philosophy was no longer satisfying. Minds and hearts were yearning for a new revelation, and in default thereof steeping themselves in mystical speculations. A voluminous theosophic literature sprang up. The *Zohar*, the Bible of mysticism, was circulated, its authorship being fastened upon a rabbi of olden days. It is altogether probable that the real author was living at the time; many think that it was Moses de Leon. The liberal party counted in its ranks the two distinguished families of Tibbon and Kimchi, the former famed as successful translators, the latter as grammarians. Their best known representatives were Judah ibn Tibbon and David Kimchi. Curiously enough, the will of the former contains, in unmistakable terms, the opinion that "Property is theft," anticipating Proudhon, who, had he known it, would have seen in its early enunciation additional testimony to its truth. The liberal faction was also supported by Jacob ben Abba-Mari, the

friend of Frederick II. and Michael Scotus. Abba-Mari lived at the German emperor's court at Naples, and quoted him in his commentary upon the Bible as an exegete. Besides there were among the Maimunists, or rationalists, Levi ben Abraham, an extraordinarily liberal man; Shemtob Palquera, one of the most learned Jews of his century, and Yedaya Penini, a philosopher and pessimistic poet, whose "Contemplation of the World" was translated by Mendelssohn, and praised by Lessing and Goethe. Despite this array of talent, the opponents were stronger, the most representative partisan being the Talmudist Solomon ben Aderet.

At the same time disputations about the Talmud, ending with its public burning at Paris, were carried on with the Christian clergy. The other literary current of the age is designated by the word Kabbala, which held many of the finest and noblest minds captive to its witchery. The Kabbala is unquestionably a continuation of earlier theosophic inquiries. Its chief doctrines have been stated by a thorough student of our literature: All that exists originates in God, the source of light eternal. He Himself can be known only through His manifestations. He is without beginning, and veiled in mystery, or, He is nothing, because the whole of creation has developed from nothing. This nothing is one, indivisible, and limitless—*En-Sof*. God fills space, He is space itself. In order to manifest Himself, in order to create, that is, disclose Himself by means of emanations, He contracts, thus producing vacant

space. The *En-Sof* first manifested itself in the prototype of the whole of creation, in the macrocosm called the "son of God," the first man, as he appears upon the chariot of Ezekiel. From this primitive man the whole created world emanates in four stages: *Azila*, *Beria*, *Yezira*, *Asiya*. The *Azila* emanation represents the active qualities of primitive man. They are forces or intelligences flowing from him, at once his essential qualities and the faculties by which he acts. There are ten of these forces, forming the ten sacred *Sefiroth*, a word which first meaning number came to stand for sphere. The first three *Sefiroth* are intelligences, the seven others, attributes. They are supposed to follow each other in this order: 1. *Kether* (crown); 2. *Chochma* (wisdom); 3. *Beena* (understanding); 4. *Chesed* (grace), or *Ghedulla* (greatness); 5. *Ghevoora* (dignity); 6. *Tifereth* (splendor); 7. *Nezach* (victory); 8. *Hod* (majesty); 9. *Yesod* (principle); 10. *Malchuth* (kingdom). From this first world of the *Azila* emanate the three other worlds, *Asiya* being the lowest stage. Man has part in these three worlds; a microcosm, he realizes in his actual being what is foreshadowed by the ideal, primitive man. He holds to the *Asiya* by his vital part (*Nefesh*), to the *Yezira* by his intellect (*Ruach*), to the *Beria* by his soul (*Neshama*). The last is his immortal part, a spark of divinity.

Speculations like these, followed to their logical issue, are bound to lead the investigator out of Judaism into Trinitarianism or Pantheism. Kabbalists, of course only in rare cases, realized the danger.

The sad conditions prevailing in the era after the expulsion from Spain, a third exile, were in all respects calculated to promote the development of mysticism, and it did flourish luxuriantly.

Some few philosophers, the last of a long line, still await mention: Levi ben Gerson, Joseph Kaspi, Moses of Narbonne in southern France, long a seat of Jewish learning; then, Isaac ben Sheshet, Chasdaï Crescas, whose "Light of God" exercised deep influence upon Spinoza and his philosophy; the Duran family, particularly Profiat Duran, successful defender of Judaism against the attacks of apostates and Christians; and Joseph Albo, who in his principal philosophic work, *Ikkarim*, shows Judaism to be based upon three fundamental doctrines: the belief in the existence of God, Revelation, and the belief in future reward and punishment. These writers are the last to reflect the glories of the golden age.

At the entrance to the next period we again meet a man of extraordinary ability, Isaac Abrabanel, one of the most eminent and esteemed of Bible commentators, in early life minister to a Catholic king, later on a pilgrim scholar wandering about exiled with his sons, one of whom, Yehuda, has fame as the author of the *Dialoghi di Amore*. In the train of exiles passing from Portugal to the Orient are Abraham Zacuto, an eminent historian of Jewish literature and sometime professor of astronomy at the university of Salamanca; Joseph ibn Verga, the historian of his nation; Amatus Lusitanus, who came close upon the discovery of the circulation of the

blood; Israel Nagara, the most gifted poet of the century, whose hymns brought him popular favor; later, Joseph Karo, "the most influential personage of the sixteenth century," his claims upon recognition resting on the *Shulchan Aruch*, an exhaustive codex of Jewish customs and laws; and many others. In Salonica, the exiles soon formed a prosperous community, where flourished Jacob ibn Chabib, the first compiler of the Haggadistic tales of the Talmud, and afterwards David Conforte, a reputable historian. In Jerusalem, Obadiah Bertinoro was engaged on his celebrated Mishna commentary, in the midst of a large circle of Kabbalists, of whom Solomon Alkabez is the best known on account of his famous Sabbath song, *Lecho Dodi*. Once again Jerusalem was the objective point of many pilgrims, lured thither by the prevalent Kabbalistic and Messianic vagaries. True literature gained little from such extremists. The only work produced by them that can be admitted to have literary qualities is Isaiah Hurwitz's "The Two Tables of the Testimony," even at this day enjoying celebrity. It is a sort of cyclopædia of Jewish learning, compiled and expounded from a mystic's point of view.

The condition of the Jews in Italy was favorable, and their literary products derive grace from their good fortune. The Renaissance had a benign effect upon them, and the revival of classical studies influenced their intellectual work. Greek thought met Jewish a third time. Learning was enjoying its resurrection, and whenever their wretched political and

social condition was not a hindrance, the Jews joined in the general delight. Their misery, however, was an undiminishing burden, yea, even in the days in which, according to Erasmus, it was joy to live. In fact, it was growing heavier. All the more noteworthy is it that Hebrew studies engaged the research of scholars, albeit they showed care for the word of God, and not for His people. Pico della Mirandola studies the Kabbala; the Jewish grammarian Elias Levita is the teacher of Cardinal Egidio de Viterbo, and later of Paul Fagius and Sebastian Münster, the latter translating his teacher's works into Latin; popes and sultans prefer Jews as their physicians in ordinary, who, as a rule, are men of literary distinction; the Jews translate philosophic writings from Hebrew and Arabic into Latin; Elias del Medigo is summoned as arbiter in the scholastic conflict at the University of Padua;—all boots nothing, ruin is not averted. Reuchlin may protest as he will, the Jew is exiled, the Talmud burnt.

In such dreary days the Portuguese Samuel Usque writes his work, *Consolaçam as Tribulações de Ysrael*, and Joseph Cohen, his chronicle, "The Vale of Weeping," the most important history produced since the day of Flavius Josephus,—additional proofs that the race possesses native buoyancy, and undaunted heroism in enduring suffering. Women, too, in increasing number, participate in the spiritual work of their nation; among them, Deborah Ascarelli and Sara Copia Sullam, the most distinguished of a long array of names.

The keen critic and scholar, Azariah de Rossi, is one of the literary giants of his period. His researches in the history of Jewish literature are the basis upon which subsequent work in this department rests, and many of his conclusions still stand unassailable. About him are grouped Abraham de Portaleone, an excellent archæologist, who established that Jews had been the first to observe the medicinal uses of gold; David de Pomis, the author of a famous defense of Jewish physicians; and Leo de Modena, the rabbi of Venice, "unstable as water," wavering between faith and unbelief, and, Kabbalist and rabbi though he was, writing works against the Kabbala on the one hand, and against rabbinical tradition on the other. Similar to him in character is Joseph del Medigo, an itinerant author, who sometimes reviles, sometimes extols, the Kabbala.

There are men of higher calibre, as, for instance, Isaac Aboab, whose *Nomologia* undertakes to defend Jewish tradition against every sort of assailant; Samuel Aboab, a great Bible scholar; Azariah Figo, a famous preacher; and, above all, Moses Chayyim Luzzatto, the first Jewish dramatist, the dramas preceding his having interest only as attempts. He, too, is caught in the meshes of the Kabbala, and falls a victim to its powers of darkness. His dramas testify to poetic gifts and to extraordinary mastery of the Hebrew language, the faithful companion of the Jewish nation in all its journeyings. To complete this sketch of the Italian Jews of that period, it

should be added that while in intellect and attainments they stand above their brethren in faith of other countries, in character and purity of morals they are their inferiors.

Thereafter literary interest centres in Poland, where rabbinical literature found its most zealous and most learned exponents. Throughout the land schools were established, in which the Talmud was taught by the *Pilpul*, an ingenious, quibbling method of Talmudic reasoning and discussion, said to have originated with Jacob Pollak. Again we have a long succession of distinguished names. There are Solomon Luria, Moses Isserles, Joel Sirkes, David ben Levi, Sabbataï Kohen, and Elias Wilna. Sabbataï Kohen, from whom, were pride of ancestry permissible in the republic of letters, the present writer would boast descent, was not only a Talmudic writer; he also left historical and poetical works. Elias Wilna, the last in the list, had a subtle, delicately poised mind, and deserves special mention for his determined opposition to the Kabbala and its offspring Chassidism, hostile and ruinous to Judaism and Jewish learning.

A gleam of true pleasure can be obtained from the history of the Dutch Jews. In Holland the Jews united secular culture with religious devotion, and the professors of other faiths met them with tolerance and friendliness. Sunshine falls upon the Jewish schools, and right into the heart of a youth, who straightway abandons the Talmud folios, and goes out into the world to proclaim to wondering man-

kind the evangel of a new philosophy. The youth is Baruch Spinoza!

There are many left to expound Judaism: Manasseh ben Israel, writing both Hebrew and Latin books to plead the cause of the emancipation of his people and of its literary pre-eminence; David Nieto, a student of philosophy; Benjamin Mussafia, Orobio de Castro, David Abenator Melo, the Spanish translator of the Psalms, and Daniel de Barrios, poet and critic—all using their rapidly acquired fluency in the Dutch language to champion the cause of their people.

In Germany, a mixture of German and Hebrew had come into use among the Jews as the medium of daily intercourse. In this peculiar patois, called *Judendeutsch*, a large literature had developed. Before Luther's time, it possessed two fine translations of the Bible, besides numerous writings of an ethical, poetical, and historical character, among which particular mention should be made of those on the German legend-cycles of the middle ages. At the same time, the Talmud receives its due of time, effort, and talent. New life comes only with the era of emancipation and enlightenment.

Only a few names shall be mentioned, the rest would be bound soon to escape the memory of the casual reader: there is an historian, David Gans; a bibliographer, Sabbatai Bassista, and the Talmudists Abigedor Kara, Jacob Joshua, Jacob Emden, Jonathan Eibeschütz, and Ezekiel Landau. It is delight to be able once again to chronicle the interest taken

in long neglected Jewish literature by such Christian scholars as the two Buxtorfs, Bartolucci, Wolff, Surrenhuys, and De Rossi. Unfortunately, the interest dies out with them, and it is significant that to this day most eminent theologians, decidedly to their own disadvantage, "content themselves with unreliable secondary sources," instead of drinking from the fountain itself.

We have arrived at the sixth and last period, our own, not yet completed, whose fruits will be judged by a future generation. It is the period of the rejuvenescence of Jewish literature. Changes in character, tenor, form, and language take place. Germany for the first time is in the van, and Mendelssohn, its most attractive figure, stands at the beginning of the period, surrounded by his disciples Wessely, Homberg, Euchel, Friedländer, and others, in conjunction with whom he gives Jews a new, pure German Bible translation. Poetry and philology are zealously pursued, and soon Jewish science, through its votaries Leopold Zunz and S. J. Rappaport, celebrates a brilliant renaissance, such as the poet describes: "In the distant East the dawn is breaking,—The olden times are growing young again."

Die Gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden, by Zunz, published in 1832, was the pioneer work of the new Jewish science, whose present development, despite its wide range, has not yet exhausted the suggestions made by the author. Other equally important works from the same pen followed, and

then came the researches of Rappaport, Z. Frankel, I. M. Jost, M. Sachs, S. D. Luzzatto, S. Munk, A. Geiger, L. Herzfeld, H. Graetz, J. Fürst, L. Dukes, M. Steinschneider, D. Cassel, S. Holdheim, and a host of minor investigators and teachers. Their loving devotion roused Jewish science and literature from their secular sleep to vigorous, intellectual life, reacting beneficently on the spiritual development of Judaism itself. The moulders of the new literature are such men as the celebrated preachers Adolf Jellinek, Salomon, Kley, Mannheimer; the able thinkers Steinheim, Hirsch, Krochmal; the illustrious scholars M. Lazarus, H. Steinthal; and the versatile journalists G. Riesser and L. Philipson.

Poetry has not been neglected in the general revival. The first Jewish poet to write in German was M. E. Kuh, whose tragic fate has been pathetically told by Berthold Auerbach in his *Dichter und Kaufmann*. The burden of this modern Jewish poetry is, of course, the glorification of the loyalty and fortitude that preserved the race during a calamitous past. Such poets as Steinheim, Wihl, L. A. Frankl, M. Beer, K. Beck, Th. Creizenach, M. Hartmann, S. H. Mosenthal, Henriette Ottenheimer, Moritz Rappaport, and L. Stein, sing the songs of Zion in the tongue of the German. And can Heine be forgotten, he who in his *Romanzero* has so melodiously, yet so touchingly given word to the hoary sorrow of the Jew?

In an essay of this scope no more can be done than give the barest outline of the modern move-

ment. A detailed description of the work of German-Jewish lyrists belongs to the history of German literature, and, in fact, on its pages can be found a due appreciation of their worth by unprejudiced critics, who give particularly high praise to the new species of tales, the Jewish village, or Ghetto, tales, with which Jewish and German literatures have latterly been enriched. Their object is to depict the religious customs in vogue among Jews of past generations, their home-life, and the conflicts that arose when the old Judaism came into contact with modern views of life. The master in the art of telling these Ghetto tales is Leopold Kompert. Of his disciples—for all coming after him may be considered such—A. Bernstein described the Jews of Posen; K. E. Franzos and L. Herzberg-Fränkell, those of Poland; E. Kulke, the Moravian Jews; M. Goldschmied, the Dutch; S. H. Mosenthal, the Hessian, and M. Lehmann, the South German. To Berthold Auerbach's pioneer work this whole class of literature owes its existence; and Heinrich Heine's fragment, *Rabbi von Bacharach*, a model of its kind, puts him into this category of writers, too.

And so Judaism and Jewish literature are stepping into a new arena, on which potent forces that may radically affect both are struggling with each other. Is Jewish poetry on the point of dying out, or is it destined to enjoy a resurrection? Who would be rash enough to prophesy aught of a race whose entire past is a riddle, whose literature is a question-mark? Of a race which for more than a thousand

years has, like its progenitor, been wrestling victoriously with gods and men?

To recapitulate: We have followed out the course of a literary development, beginning in grey antiquity with biblical narratives, assimilating Persian doctrines, Greek wisdom, and Roman law; later, Arabic poetry and philosophy, and, finally, the whole of European science in all its ramifications. The literature we have described has contributed its share to every spiritual result achieved by humanity, and is a still unexplored treasury of poetry and philosophy, of experience and knowledge.

"All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is never full," saith the Preacher; so all spiritual currents flow together into the vast ocean of a world-literature, never full, never complete, rejoicing in every accession, reaching the climax of its might and majesty on that day when, according to the prophet, "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea,"

THE TALMUD

In the whole range of the world's literatures there are few books with so checkered a career, so curious a fate, as the Talmud has had. The name is simple enough, it glides glibly from the tongue, yet how difficult to explain its import to the uninitiated! From the Dominican Henricus Seynensis, who took "Talmud" to be the name of a rabbi—he introduces a quotation with *Ut narrat rabbinus Talmud*, "As Rabbi Talmud relates"—down to the church historians and university professors of our day, the oddest misconceptions on the nature of the Talmud have prevailed even among learned men. It is not astonishing, then, that the general reader has no notion of what it is.

Only within recent years the Talmud has been made the subject of scientific study, and now it is consulted by philologists, cited by jurists, drawn upon by historians, the general public is beginning to be interested in it, and of late the old Talmud has repeatedly been summoned to appear in courts of law to give evidence. Under these circumstances it is natural to ask, What is the Talmud? Futile to seek an answer by comparing this gigantic monument of the human intellect with any other book; it is *sui generis*. In the form in which it issued from

the Jewish academies of Babylonia and Palestine, it is a great national work, a scientific document of first importance, the archives of ten centuries, in which are preserved the thoughts and opinions, the views and verdicts, the errors, transgressions, hopes, disappointments, customs, ideals, convictions, and sorrows of Israel—a work produced by the zeal and patience of thirty generations, laboring with a self-denial unparalleled in the history of literature. A work of this character assuredly deserves to be known. Unfortunately, the path to its understanding is blocked by peculiar linguistic and historical difficulties. Above all, explanations by comparison must be avoided. It has been likened to a legal code, to a journal, to the transactions of learned bodies; but these comparisons are both inadequate and misleading. To make it approximately clear a lengthy explanation must be entered upon, for, in truth, the Talmud, like the Bible, is a world in miniature, embracing every possible phase of life.

The origin of the Talmud was simultaneous with Israel's return from the Babylonian exile, during which a wonderful change had taken place in the captive people. An idolatrous, rebellious nation had turned into a pious congregation of the Lord, possessed with zeal for the study of the Law. By degrees there grew up out of this study a science of wide scope, whose beginnings are hidden in the last book of the Bible, in the word *Midrash*, translated by "story" in the Authorized Version. Its true meaning is indicated by that of its root, *darash*,

to study, to expound. Four different methods of explaining the sacred Scriptures were current: the first aimed to reach the simple understanding of words as they stood; the second availed itself of suggestions offered by apparently superfluous letters and signs in the text to arrive at its meaning; the third was "a homiletic application of that which had been to that which was and would be, of prophetic and historical dicta to the actual condition of things"; and the fourth devoted itself to theosophic mysteries—but all led to a common goal.

In the course of the centuries the development of the Midrash, or study of the Law, lay along the two strongly marked lines of Halacha, the explanation and formulating of laws, and Haggada, their poetical illustration and ethical application. These are the two spheres within which the intellectual life of Judaism revolved, and these the two elements, the legal and the æsthetic, making up the Talmud.

The two Midrashic systems emphasize respectively the rule of law and the sway of liberty: Halacha is law incarnate; Haggada, liberty regulated by law and bearing the impress of morality. Halacha stands for the rigid authority of the Law, for the absolute importance of theory—the law and theory which the Haggada illustrates by public opinion and the dicta of common-sense morality. The Halacha embraces the statutes enjoined by oral tradition, which was the unwritten commentary of the ages on the written Law, along with the discussions of the academies of Palestine and Babylonia, result-

ing in the final formulating of the Halachic ordinances. The Haggada, while also starting from the word of the Bible, only plays with it, explaining it by sagas and legends, by tales and poems, allegories, ethical reflections, and historical reminiscences. For it, the Bible was not only the supreme law, from whose behests there was no appeal, but also "a golden nail upon which" the Haggada "hung its gorgeous tapestries," so that the Bible word was the introduction, refrain, text, and subject of the poetical glosses of the Talmud. It was the province of the Halacha to build, upon the foundation of biblical law, a legal superstructure capable of resisting the ravages of time, and, unmindful of contemporaneous distress and hardship, to trace out, for future generations, the extreme logical consequences of the Law in its application. To the Haggada belonged the high, ethical mission of consoling, edifying, exhorting, and teaching a nation suffering the pangs, and threatened with the spiritual stagnation, of exile; of proclaiming that the glories of the past prefigured a future of equal brilliancy, and that the very wretchedness of the present was part of the divine plan outlined in the Bible. If the simile is accurate that likens the Halacha to the ramparts about Israel's sanctuary, which every Jew was ready to defend with his last drop of blood, then the Haggada must seem "flowery mazes, of exotic colors and bewildering fragrance," within the shelter of the Temple walls.

The complete work of expounding, developing, and finally establishing the Law represents the labor

of many generations, the method of procedure varying from time to time. In the long interval between the close of the Holy Canon and the completion of the Talmud can be distinguished three historical strata deposited by three different classes of teachers. The first set, the Scribes—*Soferim*—flourished in the period beginning with the return from Babylonian captivity and ending with the Syrian persecutions (220 B. C. E.), and their work was the preservation of the text of the Holy Writings and the simple expounding of biblical ordinances. They were followed by the "Learners"—*Tana'im*—whose activity extended until 220 C. E. Great historical events occurred in that period: the campaigns of the Maccabean heroes, the birth of Jesus, the destruction of the Temple by the Romans, the rebellion under Bar-Kochba, and the final complete dispersion of the Jews. Amid all these storms the *Tana'im* did not for a moment relinquish their diligent research in the Law. The Talmud tells the story of a celebrated rabbi, than which nothing can better characterize the age and its scholars: Night was falling. A funeral cortege was moving through the streets of old Jerusalem. It was said that disciples were bearing a well-beloved teacher to the grave. Reverentially the way was cleared, not even the Roman guard at the gate hindered the procession. Beyond the city walls it halted, the bier was set down, the lid of the coffin opened, and out of it arose the venerable form of Rabbi Jochanan ben Zakkaï, who, to reach the Roman camp unmolested, had feigned

death. He went before Vespasian, and, impressed by the noble figure of the hoary rabbi, the general promised him the fulfilment of any wish he might express. What was his petition? Not for his nation, not for the preservation of the Holy City, not even for the Temple. His request was simple: "Permit me to open a school at Jabneh." The proud Roman smilingly gave consent. He had no conception of the significance of this prayer and of the prophetic wisdom of the petitioner, who, standing on the ruins of his nation's independence, thought only of rescuing the Law. Rome, the empire of the "iron legs," was doomed to be crushed, nation after nation to be swallowed in the vortex of time, but Israel lives by the Law, the very law snatched from the smouldering ruins of Jerusalem, the beloved alike of crazy zealots and despairing peace advocates, and carried to the tiny seaport of Jabneh. There Jochanan ben Zakkai opened his academy, the gathering place of the dispersed of his disciples and his people, and thence, gifted with a prophet's keen vision, he proclaimed Israel's mission to be, not the offering of sacrifices, but the accomplishment of works of peace.¹

The *Tana'im* may be considered the most original expounders of the science of Judaism, which they fostered at their academies. In the course of centuries their intellectual labor amassed an abundant store of scientific material, together with so vast a number of injunctions, prohibitions, and laws that it

¹ *Midrash Echah*, I., 5; *Mishna, Rosh Hashana*, chap. II.

became almost impossible to master the subject. The task of scholars now was to arrange the accumulation of material and reduce it to a system. Rabbi after rabbi undertook the task, but only the fourth attempt at codification, that made by Yehuda the Prince, was successful. His compilation, classifying the subject-matter under six heads, subdivided into sixty-three tractates, containing five hundred and twenty-four chapters, was called Mishna, and came to be the authority appealed to on points of law.

Having assumed fixity as a code, the Mishna in turn became what the Bible had been for centuries—a text, the basis of all legal development and scientific discussion. So it was used by the epigones, the *Amora'im*, or Speakers, the expounders of the third period. For generations commenting on the Mishna was the sum-total of literary endeavor. Traditions unheeded before sprang to light. New methods asserted themselves. To the older generation of Halachists succeeded a set of men headed by Akiba ben Joseph, who, ignoring practical issues, evolved laws from the Bible text or from traditions held to be divine. A spiritual, truly religious conception of Judaism was supplanted by legal quibbling and subtle methods of interpretation. Like the sophists of Rome and Alexandria at that time, the most celebrated teachers in the academies of Babylonia and Palestine for centuries gave themselves up to casuistry. This is the history of the development of the Talmud, or more correctly of the two Talmuds, the

one, finished in 390 C. E., being the expression of what was taught at the Palestinian academies; the other, more important one, completed in 500 C. E., of what was taught in Babylonia.

The Babylonian, the one regarded as authoritative, is about four times as large as the Jerusalem Talmud. Its thirty-six treatises (*Massichtoth*), in our present edition, cover upwards of three thousand folio pages, bound in twelve huge volumes. To speak of a completed Talmud is as incorrect as to speak of a biblical canon. No religious body, no solemn resolution of a synod, ever declared either the Talmud or the Bible a completed whole. Canonizing of any kind is distinctly opposed to the spirit of Judaism. The fact is that the tide of traditional lore has never ceased to flow.

We now have before us a faint outline sketch of the growth of the Talmud. To portray the busy world fitting into this frame is another and more difficult matter. A catalogue of its contents may be made. It may be said that it is a book containing ✓ laws and discussions, philosophic, theologic, and juridic dicta, historical notes and national reminiscences, injunctions and prohibitions controlling all the positions and relations of life, curious, quaint tales, ideal maxims and proverbs, uplifting legends, charming lyrical outbursts, and attractive enigmas side by side with misanthropic utterances, bewildering medical prescriptions, superstitious practices, expressions of deep agony, peculiar astrological charms, and rambling digressions on law, zo-

ology, and botany, and when all this has been said, not half its contents have been told. It is a luxuriant jungle, which must be explored by him who would gain an adequate idea of its features and products.

✓ The Ghemara, that is, the whole body of discussions recorded in the two Talmuds, primarily forms a running commentary on the text of the Mishna. At the same time, it is the arena for the debating and investigating of subjects growing out of the Mishna, or suggested by a literature developed along with the Talmudic literature. These discussions, debates, and investigations are the opinions and arguments of the different schools, holding opposite views, developed with rare acumen and scholastic subtlety, and finally harmonized in the solution reached. The one firm and impregnable rock supporting the gigantic structure of the Talmud is the word of the Bible, held sacred and inviolable.

The best translations—single treatises have been put into modern languages—fail to convey an adequate idea of the discussions and method that evolved the Halacha. It is easier to give an approximately true presentation of the rabbinical system of practical morality as gleaned from the Haggada. It must, of course, be borne in mind that Halacha and Haggada are not separate works; they are two fibres of the same thread. "The whole of the Haggadistic literature—the hitherto unappreciated archives of language, history, archæology, religion, poetry, and science—with but slight reserva-

tions may be called a national literature, containing as it does the aggregate of the views and opinions of thousands of thinkers belonging to widely separated generations. Largely, of course, these views and opinions are peculiar to the individuals holding them or to their time"; still, every Haggadistic expression, in a general way, illustrates some fundamental, national law, based upon the national religion and the national history.¹ Through the Haggada we are vouchsafed a glance into a mysterious world, which mayhap has hitherto repelled us as strange and grewsome. Its poesy reveals vistas of gleaming beauty and light, luxuriant growth and exuberant life, while familiar melodies caress our ears.

The Haggada conveys its poetic message in the garb of allegory, song, and chiefly epigrammatic saying. Form is disregarded; the spirit is all-important, and suffices to cover up every fault of form. The Talmud, of course, does not yield a complete system of ethics, but its practical philosophy consists of doctrines that underlie a moral life. The injustice of the abuse heaped upon it would become apparent to its harshest critics from a few of its maxims and rules of conduct, such as the following: Be of them that are persecuted, not of the perse-

¹ Cmp. Wünsche, *Die Haggada des jerusalemischen Talmud*, and the same author's great work, *Die Haggada des babylonischen Talmud*, II.; also W. Bacher, *Die Agada der Tannaiten*, *Die Agada der babylonischen Amoräer*, and *Die Agada der palästinensischen Amoräer*, Vol. I.

cutors.—Be the cursed, not he that curses.—They that are persecuted, and do not persecute, that are vilified and do not retort, that act in love, and are cheerful even in suffering, they are the lovers of God.—Bless God for the good as well as the evil. When thou hearest of a death, say, “Blessed be the righteous Judge.”—Life is like unto a fleeting shadow. Is it the shadow of a tower or of a bird? It is the shadow of a bird in its flight. Away flies the bird, and neither bird nor shadow remains behind.—Repentance and good works are the aim of all earthly wisdom.—Even the just will not have so high a place in heaven as the truly repentant.—He whose learning surpasses his good works is like a tree with many branches and few roots, which a wind-storm uproots and casts to the ground. But he whose good works surpass his learning is like a tree with few branches and many roots; all the winds of heaven cannot move it from its place.—There are three crowns: the crown of the Law, the crown of the priesthood, the crown of kingship. But greater than all is the crown of a good name.—Four there are that cannot enter Paradise: the scoffer, the liar, the hypocrite, and the backbiter.—Beat the gods, and the priests will tremble.—Contrition is better than many flagellations.—When the pitcher falls upon the stone, woe unto the pitcher; when the stone falls upon the pitcher, woe unto the pitcher; whatever betides, woe unto the pitcher.—The place does not honor the man, the man honors the place.—He who humbles himself will be exalted; he who

exalts himself will be humbled.—Whosoever pursues greatness, from him will greatness flee; whosoever flees from greatness; him will greatness pursue.—Charity is as important as all other virtues combined.—Be tender and yielding like a reed, not hard and proud like a cedar.—The hypocrite will not see God.—It is not sufficient to be innocent before God; we must show our innocence to the world.—The works encouraged by a good man are better than those he executes.—Woe unto him that practices usury, he shall not live; whithersoever he goes, he carries injustice and death.

The same Talmud that fills chapter after chapter with minute legal details and hairsplitting debates outlines with a few strokes the most ideal conception of life, worth more than theories and systems of religious philosophy. A Haggada passage says: Six hundred and thirteen injunctions were given by Moses to the people of Israel. David reduced them to eleven; the prophet Isaiah classified these under six heads; Micah enumerated only three: "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." Another prophet limited them to two: "Keep ye judgment, and do righteousness." Amos put all the commandments under one: "Seek ye me, and ye shall live"; and Habakkuk said: "The just shall live by his faith."—This is the ethics of the Talmud.

Another characteristic manifestation of the idealism of the Talmud is its delicate feeling for women and children. Almost extravagant affection is dis-

played for the little ones. All the verses of Scripture that speak of flowers and gardens are applied in the Talmud to children and schools. Their breath sustains the moral order of the universe: "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings has God founded His might." They are called flowers, stars, the anointed of God. When God was about to give the Law, He demanded of the Israelites pledges to assure Him that they would keep His commandments holy. They offered the patriarchs, but each one of them had committed some sin. They named Moses as their surety; not even he was guiltless. Then they said: "Let our children be our hostages." The Lord accepted them.

Similarly, there are many expressions to show that woman was held in high esteem by the rabbis of the Talmud: Love thy wife as thyself; honor her more than thyself.—In choosing a wife, descend a step.—If thy wife is small, bend and whisper into her ear.—God's altar weeps for him that forsakes the love of his youth.—He who sees his wife die before him has, as it were, been present at the destruction of the sanctuary itself; around him the world grows dark.—It is woman alone through whom God's blessings are vouchsafed to a house.—The children of him that marries for money shall be a curse unto him,—a warning singularly applicable to the circumstances of our own times.

The peculiar charm of the Haggada is best revealed in its legends and tales, its fables and myths, its apologues and allegories, its riddles and songs.

The starting-point of the Haggada usually is some memory of the great past. It entwines and enmeshes in a magic network the lives of the patriarchs, prophets, and martyrs, and clothes with fresh, luxuriant green the old ideals and figures, giving them new life for a remote generation. The teachers of the Haggada allow no opportunity, sad or merry, to pass without utilizing it in the guise of an apologue or parable. Alike for wedding-feasts and funerals, for banquets and days of fasting, the garden of the Haggada is rifled of its fragrant blossoms and luscious fruits. Simplicity, grace, and childlike merriment pervade its fables, yet they are profound, even sublime, in their truth. "Their chief and enduring charm is their fathomless depth, their unassuming loveliness." Poems constructed with great artistic skill do not occur. Here and there a modest bud of lyric poesy shyly raises its head, like the following couplet, describing a celebrated but ill-favored rabbi:

"Without charm of form and face,
But a mind of rarest grace."

Over the grave of the same teacher the Talmud wails:

"The Holy Land did beautify what womb of Shinar gave;
And now Tiberias' tear-filled eye weeps o'er her treasure's
grave."

On seeing the dead body of the Patriarch Yehuda, a rabbi laments:

"Angels strove to win the testimony's ark.
Men they overcame; lo! vanished is the ark!"

Another threnody over some prince in the realm
of the intellect:

"The cedar hath by flames been seized;
Can hyssop then be saved?
Leviathan with hook was caught;
Alas! ye little fish!
The deep and mighty stream ran dry,
Ah woe! ye shallow brooks!"

Nor is humor lacking. "Ah, hamper great, with
books well-filled, thou'rt gone!" is a bookworm's
eulogy.

Poets naturally have not been slow to avail them-
selves of the material stored in the Haggada. Many
of its treasures, tricked out in modern verse, have
been given to the world. The following are
samples:¹

BIRTH AND DEATH

"His hands fast clenched, his fingers firmly clasped,
So man this life begins.
He claims earth's wealth, and constitutes himself
The heir of all her gifts.
He thinks his hand may snatch and hold
Whatever life doth yield.

But when at last the end has come,
His hands are open wide,
No longer closed. He knoweth now full well,
That vain were all his hopes.
He humbly says, 'I go, and nothing take
Of all my hands have wrought.'"

¹ M. Sachs, *Stimmen vom Jordan und Euphrat*.

The next, "Interest and Usury," may serve to give the pertinacious opponent of the Talmud a better opinion of its position on financial subjects:

"Behold ! created things of every kind
Lend each to each. The day from night doth take,
And night from day ; nor do they quarrel make
Like men, who doubting one another's mind,
E'en while they utter friendly words, think ill.
The moon delighted helps the starry host,
And each returns her gift without a boast.
'Tis only when the Lord supreme doth will
That earth in gloom shall be enwrapped,
He tells the moon : 'Refrain, keep back thy light !'
And quenches, too, the myriad lamps of night.
From wisdom's fount hath knowledge oft-times lapped,
While wisdom humbly doth from knowledge learn.
The skies drop blessings on the grateful earth,
And she—of precious store there is no dearth—
Exhales and sends aloft a fair return.
Stern law with mercy tempers its decree,
And mercy acts with strength by justice lent.
Good deeds are based on creed from heaven sent,
In which, in turn, the sap of deeds must be.
Each creature borrows, lends, and gives with love,
Nor e'er disputes, to honor God above.

When man, howe'er, his fellowman hath fed,
Then 'spite the law forbidding interest,
He thinketh naught but cursèd gain to wrest.
Who taketh usury methinks hath said :
'O Lord, in beauty has Thy earth been wrought !
But why should men for naught enjoy its plains ?
Ask usance, since 'tis Thou that sendest rains.
Have they the trees, their fruits, and blossoms bought ?
For all they here enjoy, Thy int'rest claim :

For heaven's orbs that shine by day and night,
 Th' immortal soul enkindled by Thy light,
 And for the wondrous structure of their frame.'
 But God replies: 'Now come, and see! I give
 With open, bounteous hand, yet nothing take;
 The earth yields wealth, nor must return ye make.
 But know, O men, that only while ye live,
 You may enjoy these gifts of my award.
 The capital's mine, and surely I'll demand
 The spirit in you planted by my hand,
 And also earth will claim her due reward.'
 Man's dust to dust is gathered in the grave,
 His soul returns to God who gracious gave."

R. Yehuda ben Zakkaï answers his pupils who ask:

"Why doth the Law with them more harshly deal
 That filch a lamb from fold away,
 Than with the highwaymen who shameless steal
 Thy purse by force in open day?"

"Because in like esteem the brigands hold
 The master and his serving man.
 Their wickedness is open, frank, and bold,
 They fear not God, nor human ban.

The thief feels more respect for earthly law
 Than for his heav'nly Master's eye,
 Man's presence flees in fear and awe,
 Forgets he's seen by God on high."

That is a glimpse of the world of the Haggada—a wonderful, fantastic world, a kaleidoscopic panorama of enchanting views. "Well can we understand the distress of mind in a mediæval divine, or

even in a modern *savant*, who, bent upon following the most subtle windings of some scientific debate in the Talmudical pages—geometrical, botanical, financial, or otherwise—as it revolves round the Sabbath journey, the raising of seeds, the computation of tithes and taxes—feels, as it were, the ground suddenly give way. The loud voices grow thin, the doors and walls of the school-room vanish before his eyes, and in their place uprises Rome the Great, the *Urbs et Orbis* and her million-voiced life. Or the blooming vineyards round that other City of Hills, Jerusalem the Golden herself, are seen, and white-clad virgins move dreamily among them. Snatches of their songs are heard, the rhythm of their choric dances rises and falls: it is the most dread Day of Atonement itself, which, in poetical contrast, was chosen by the ‘Rose of Sharon’ as a day of rejoicing to walk among those waving lily-fields and vine-clad slopes. Or the clarion of rebellion rings high and shrill through the complicated debate, and Belshazzar, the story of whose ghastly banquet is told with all the additions of maddening horror, is doing service for Nero the bloody; or Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian tyrant, and all his hosts, are cursed with a yelling curse—*à propos* of some utterly inappropriate legal point, while to the initiated he stands for Titus the—at last exploded—‘Delight of Humanity.’ . . . Often—far too often for the interests of study and the glory of the human race—does the steady tramp of the Roman cohort, the password of the revolution, the shriek and clangor of the

bloody field, interrupt these debates, and the arguing masters and disciples don their arms, and, with the cry, 'Jerusalem and Liberty,' rush to the fray."¹

Such is the world of the Talmud.

¹ Emanuel Deutsch, "Literary Remains," p. 45.

THE JEW IN THE HISTORY OF CIVILIZATION¹

In the childhood of civilization, the digging of wells was regarded as beneficent work. Guide-posts, visible from afar, marked their position, and hymns were composed, and solemn feasts celebrated, in honor of the event. One of the choicest bits of early Hebrew poetry is a song of the well. The soul, in grateful joy, jubilantly calls to her mates: "Arise! sing a song unto the well! Well, which the princes have dug, which the nobles of the people have hollowed out."² This house, too, is a guide-post to a newly-found well of humanity and culture, a monument to our faithfulness and zeal in the recognition and the diffusion of truth. A scene like this brings to my mind the psalmist's beautiful words:³ "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garment; as the dew of Hermon, running down upon the mountains of Zion; for there hath the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore."

¹ Address at the dedication of the new meeting-house of the Independent Order B'nai B'rith, at Berlin.

² Numbers, xxi. 17, 18.

³ Psalm cxxxiii.

Wondrous thoughts veiled with wondrous imagery! The underlying meaning will lead us to our feast of the well, our celebration in honor of newly-discovered waters. Our order is based upon the conviction that all men should be banded together for purposes of humanity. But what is humanity? Not philanthropy, not benevolence, not charity: it is "human culture risen to the stage on which man is conscious of universal brotherhood, and strives for the realization of the general good." In early times, leaders of men were anointed with oil, symbol of wisdom and divine inspiration. Above all it was meet that it be used in the consecration of priests, the exponents of the divine spirit and the Law. The psalmist's idea is, that as the precious ointment in its abundance runs down Aaron's beard to the hem of his garment, even so shall wisdom and the divine spirit overflow the lips of priests, the guides, friends, and teachers of the people, the promoters of the law of peace and love.

"As the dew of Hermon, running down upon the mountains of Zion!" High above all mountains towers Hermon, its crest enveloped by clouds and covered with eternal snow. From that supernal peak grateful dew trickles down, fructifying the land once "flowing with milk and honey." From its clefts gushes forth Jordan, mightiest stream of the land, watering a broad plain in its course. In this guise the Lord has granted His blessing to the land, the blessing of civilization and material prosperity, from which spring as corollaries the duties of charity and universal humanity.

A picture of the olden time this, a lodge-address of the days of the psalm singers. Days flee, time abides; men pass away, mankind endures. Filled with time-honored thoughts, inspired by the hopes of by-gone generations, striving for the goal of noble men in all ages, like the psalm singers in the days of early culture, we celebrate a feast of the well by reviewing the past and looking forward down the avenues of time.

Less than fifty years ago a band of energetic, loyal Jews, on the other side of the Atlantic, founded our beloved Order. Now it has established itself in every part of the world, from the extreme western coast of America to the blessed meadows of the Jordan; yea, even the Holy Land, unfurling everywhere the banner of charity, brotherly love, and unity, and seeking to spread education and culture, the forerunners of humanity. Judaism, mark you, is the religion of humanity. By far too late for our good and that of mankind, we began to proclaim this truth with becoming energy and emphasis, and to demonstrate it with the joyousness of conviction. The question is, are we permeated with this conviction? Our knowledge of Judaism is slight; we have barely a suspicion of what in the course of centuries, nay, of thousands of years, it has done for the progress of civilization. In my estimation, our housewarming cannot more fittingly be celebrated than by taking a bird's-eye view of Jewish culture.

The Bible is the text-book of general literature. Out of the Bible, more particularly from the Ten

Commandments, flashed from Sinai, mankind learned its first ethical lesson in a system which still satisfies its needs. To convey even a faint idea of what the Bible has done for civilization, morality, and the literature of every people—of the innumerable texts it has furnished to poets, and subjects to painters—would in itself require a literature.

The conflicts with surrounding nations to which they were exposed made the Jews concentrate their forces, and so enabled them to wage successful war with nations mightier than themselves. Their heroism under the Maccabees and under Bar-Kochba, in the middle ages and in modern days, permits them to take rank among the most valiant in history. A historian of literature, a non-Jew, enumerates three factors constituting Jews important agents in the preservation and revival of learning:¹ First, their ability as traders. The Phoenicians are regarded as the oldest commercial nation, but the Jews contested the palm with them. Zebulon and Asher in very early times were seafaring tribes. Under Solomon, Israelitish vessels sailed as far as Ophir to bring Africa's gold to Jerusalem. Before the destruction of the Holy City, Jewish communities established themselves on the westernmost coast of Europe. "The whole of the known world was covered with their settlements, in constant communication with one another through itinerant merchants, who effected an exchange of learning as well as of wares;

¹ M. J. Schleiden: *Die Bedeutung der Juden für die Erhaltung der Wissenschaften im Mittelalter*, p. 7.

while the other nations grew more and more isolated, and shut themselves off from even the sparse opportunities of mental culture then available."

The second factor conducing to mental advancement was the schools which have flourished in Israel since the days of the prophet Samuel; and the third was the linguistic attainments of the Jews, which they owed to natural ability in this direction. Scarcely had Greek allied itself with Hebrew thought, when Jews in Alexandria wrote Greek comparable with Plato's, and not more than two hundred years after the settlement of Jews in Arabia we meet with a large number of Jewish poets among Mohammed's disciples, while in the middle ages they taught and wrote Arabic, Spanish, French, and German—versatility naturally favorable to intellectual progress.

Jewish influence may be said to have begun to exercise itself upon general culture when Judaism and Hellenism met for the first time. The result of the meeting was the new product, Judæo-Hellenic literature. Greek civilization was attractive to Jews. The new ideas were popularized for all strata of the people to imbibe. Shortly before the old pagan world crumbled, Hellenism enjoyed a beautiful, unexpected revival in Alexandria. There, strange to say, Judaism, in its home antagonistic to Hellenism, had filled and allied itself with the Greek spirit. Its literature gradually adopted Greek traditions, and the ripe fruit of the union was the Jewish-Alexandrian religious philosophy, the mediation between

two sharply contradictory systems, for the first time brought into close juxtaposition, and requiring some such new element to harmonize them. When ancient civilization in Judæa and in Hellas fell into decay, human endeavor was charged with the task of reconciling these two great historical forces diametrically opposed to each other, and the first attempt looking to this end was inspired by a Jewish genius, Jesus of Nazareth.

The Jews of Alexandria were engaged in widespread trade and shipping, and they counted among them artists, poets, civil officers, and mechanics. They naturally acquired Greek customs, and along with them Hellenic vices. The bacchanalia of Athens were enthusiastically imitated in Jerusalem, and, as a matter of course, in Alexandria. This point reached, Roman civilization asserted itself, and the people sought to affiliate with their Roman victors, while the rabbis devoted themselves to the Law, not, however, to the exclusion of scientific work. In the ranks of physicians and astronomers we find Jewish masters and Jewish disciples. Medicine has always been held in high esteem by Jews, and Samuel could justly boast before his contemporaries that the intricate courses of the stars were as well known to him as the streets of Nehardea in Babylonia.¹

The treasures of information on pedagogics, medicine, jurisprudence, astronomy, geography, zoology, botany, and last, though not least, on general

¹ *Moed Katan*, 26a.

history, buried in the Talmud, have hitherto not been valued at their true worth. The rabbis of the Talmud stood in the front ranks of culture. They compiled a calendar, in complete accord with the Metonic cycle, which modern science must declare faultless. Their classification of the bones of the human body varies but little from present results of the science of anatomy, and the Talmud demonstrates that certain Mishna ordinances are based upon geometrical propositions, which could have been known to but few mathematicians of that time. Rabbi Gamaliel, said to have made use of a telescope, was celebrated as a mathematician and astronomer, and in 289 C. E., Rabbi Joshua is reported to have calculated the orbit of Halley's comet.

The Roman conquest of Palestine effected a change in the condition of the Jews. Never before had Judah undergone such torture and suffering as under the sceptre of Rome. The misery became unendurable, and internal disorders being added to foreign oppression, the luckless insurrection broke out which gave the deathblow to Jewish nationality, and drove Judah into exile. On his thorny martyr's path he took naught with him but a book—his code, his law. Yet how prodigal his contributions to mankind's fund of culture!

About five hundred years later Judah saw springing up on his own soil a new religion which appropriated the best and the most beautiful of his spiritual possessions. Swiftly rose the vast political

and intellectual structure of Mohammedan power, and as before with Greek, so Jewish thought now allied itself with Arabic endeavor, bringing forth in Spain the golden age of neo-Hebraic literature in the spheres of poetry, metaphysical speculation, and every department of scientific research. It is not an exaggerated estimate to say that the middle ages sustained themselves with the fruit of this intellectual labor, which, moreover, has come down as a legacy to our modern era. Two hundred years after Mohammed, the same language, Arabic, was spoken by the Jews of Kairwan and those of Bagdad. Thus equipped, they performed in a remarkable way the task allotted them by their talents and their circumstances, to which they had been devoting themselves with singular zeal for two centuries. The Jews are missioned mediators between the Orient and the Occident, and their activity as such, illustrated by their additions to general culture and science, is of peculiar interest. In the period under consideration, their linguistic accomplishments fitted them to assist the Syrians in making Greek literature accessible to the Arabic mind. In Arabic literature itself, they attained to a prominent place. Modern research has not yet succeeded in shedding light upon the development and spread of science among the Arabs under the tutelage of Syrian Christians. But out of the obscurity of Greek-Arabic culture beginnings gleam Jewish names, whose possessors were the teachers of eager Arabic disciples. Barely fifty years after the hosts of the Prophet had

conquered the Holy Land, a Jew of Bassora translated from Syriac into Arabic the pandects by the presbyter Aaron, a famous medical work of the middle ages. In the annals of the next century, among the early contributors to Arabic literature, we meet with the names of Jews as translators of medical, mathematical, and astronomical works, and as grammarians, astronomers, scientists, and physicians. A Jew translated Ptolemy's "Almagest"; another assisted in the first translation of the Indian fox fables (*Kalila we-Dimna*); the first furnishing the middle ages with the basis of their astronomical science, the second supplying European poets with literary material. Through the instrumentality of Jews, Arabs became acquainted as early as the eighth century, some time before the learning of the Greeks was brought within their reach, with Indian medicine, astronomy, and poetry. Greek science itself they owed to Jewish mediation. Not only among Jews, but also among Greeks, Syrians, and Arabs, Jewish versatility gave currency to the belief that "all wisdom is of the Jews," a view often repeated by Hellenists, by the "Righteous Brethren" among the Arabs, and later by the Christian monks of Europe.

The academies of the Jews have always been pervaded by a scientific spirit. As they influenced others, so they permitted the science and culture of their neighbors to act upon their life and work. There is no doubt, for instance, that, despite the marked difference between the subjects treated by

Arabs and Jews, the peculiar qualities of the old Arabic lyrics shaped neo-Hebraic poetry. Again, as the Hebrew acrostic psalms demonstrably served as models to the older Syrian Church poets, so, in turn, Syriac psalmody probably became the pattern synagogue poetry followed. Thus Hebrew poetry completed a circuit, which, to be sure, cannot accurately be followed up through its historical stages, but which critical investigations and the comparative study of literatures have established almost as a certainty.

In the ninth century a bold, venturesome traveller, Eldad ha-Dani,¹ a sort of Jewish Ulysses, appeared among Jews, and at the same time Judaism produced Sa'adia, its first great religious philosopher and Bible translator. The Church Fathers had always looked up to the rabbis as authorities; henceforth Jews were accepted by all scholars as the teachers of Bible exegesis. Sa'adia was the first of the rabbis to translate the Hebrew Scriptures into Arabic. Justly his work is said to "recognize the current of thought dominant in his time, and to express the newly-awakened desire for the reconciliation of religious practice, as developed in the course of generations, with the source of religious inspiration." Besides, he was the first to elaborate a system of religious philosophy according to a rigid plan, and in a strictly scientific spirit.² Knowing Greek speculations, he controverts them as vigor-

¹ Cmp. "Israel's Quest in Africa," pp. 257-258

² Cmp. Gutmann, *Die Religionsphilosophie des Saddja*.

ously as the *Kalâm* of Islam philosophy. His teachings form a system of practical ethics, luminous reflections, and sound maxims. Among his contemporaries was Isaac Israeli, a physician at Kairwan, whose works, in their Latin translation by the monk Constantine, attained great reputation, and were later plagiarized by medical writers. His treatise on fever was esteemed of high worth, a translation of it being studied as a text-book for centuries, and his dietetic writings remained authoritative for five hundred years. In general, the medical science of the Arabs is under great obligations to him. Reverence for Jewish medical ability was so exaggerated in those days that Galen was identified with the Jewish sage Gamaliel. The error was fostered in the *Sefer Asaf*, a curious medical fragment of uncertain authorship and origin, by its rehearsal of an old Midrash, which traces the origin of medicine to Shem, son of Noah, who received it from angels, and transmitted it to the ancient Chaldeans, they in turn passing it on to the Egyptians, Greeks, and Arabs.

Though the birth of medicine is not likely to have taken place among Jews, it is indisputable that physicians of the Jewish race are largely to be credited with the development of medical science at every period. At the time we speak of, Jews in Egypt, northern Africa, Italy, Spain, France, and Germany were physicians in ordinary to caliphs, emperors, and popes, and everywhere they are represented among medical writers. The position occupied in

the Arabian world by Israeli, in the Occident was occupied by Sabattai Donnolo, one of the Salerno school in its early obscure days, the author of a work on *Materia medica*, possibly the oldest original production on medicine in the Hebrew language.

The period of Jewish prosperity in Spain has been called a fairy vision of history. The culture developed under its genial influences pervaded the middle ages, and projected suggestions even into our modern era. One of the most renowned *savants* at the beginning of the period was the statesman Chasdaï ben Shaprut, whose translation of Dioscorides's "Plant Lore" served as the botanical textbook of mediæval Europe. The first poet was Solomon ibn Gabirol, the author of "The Source of Life," a systematic exposition of Neoplatonic philosophy, a book of most curious fortunes. Through the Latin translation, made with the help of an apostate Jew, and bearing the author's name in the mutilated form of Avencebrol, later changed into Avicbron, scholasticism became saturated with its philosophic ideas. The pious fathers of Christian philosophy, Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas, took pains to refute them, while Duns Scotus and Giordano Bruno frequently consulted the work as an authority. In the struggle between the Scotists and the Thomists it had a prominent place as late as the fourteenth century, the contestants taking it to be the work of some great Christian philosopher standing on the threshold of the Occident and at the portals of philosophy. So it happened that the

author came down through the centuries, recognized by none, forgotten by his own, until, in our time, behind the Moorish-Christian mask of Avencebrol, Solomon Munk discovered the Jewish thinker and poet Solomon ibn Gabirol.

The work *De Causis*, attributed to David, a forgotten Jewish philosopher, must be classed with Gabirol's "Source of Life," on account of its Neoplatonism and its paramount influence upon scholasticism. In fact, only by means of a searching analysis of these two works can insight be gained into the development and aberrations of the dogmatic system of mediæval philosophy.

Other sciences, too, especially mathematics, flourished among them. One century after he wrote them, the works of Abraham ibn Ezra, renowned as an astronomer and mathematician, were translated into Latin by Italians, among whom his prestige was so great that, as may still be seen, he was painted among the expounders of mathematical science in an Italian church fresco representing the seven liberal arts. Under the name Abraham Judæus, later corrupted into Avenare, he is met with throughout the middle ages. Abraham ben Chiya, another distinguished scientist, known by the name Savasorda, compiled the first systematic outline of astronomy, and in his geographical treatise, he explained the sphericity of the earth, while the Latin translation of his geometry, based on Arabic sources, proves him to have made considerable additions to the stock of knowledge in this branch. Moses

Maimuni's intellectual vigor, and his influence upon the schoolmen through his medical, and more particularly his religio-philosophical works, are too well known to need more than passing mention.

Even in southern France and in Germany, whither the light of culture did not spread so rapidly as in Spain, Jews participated in the development of the sciences. Solomon ben Isaac, called Rashi, the great exegete, was looked up to as an authority by others beside his brethren in faith. Nicolas de Lyra, one of the most distinguished Christian Bible exegetes, confesses that his simple explanations of Scriptural passages are derived pre-eminently from Rashi's Bible commentary, and among scientific men it is acknowledged that precisely in the matter of exegesis this French monk exercised decisive influence upon Martin Luther. So it happens that in places Luther's Bible translation reveals Rashi seen through Nicolas de Lyra's spectacles.

In the quickened intellectual life of Provence Jews also took active part. David Kimchi has come to be regarded as the teacher *par excellence* of Hebrew grammar and lexicography, and Judah ibn Tibbon, one of the most notable of translators, in his testament addressed to his son made a complete presentation of contemporary science, a cyclopædia of the Arabic and the Hebrew language and literature, grammar, poetry, botany, zoology, natural history, and particularly religious philosophy, the studies of the Bible and the Talmud.

The golden age of letters was followed by a less

creative period, a significant turning-point in the history of Judaism as of spiritual progress in general. The contest between tradition and philosophy affected every mind. Literature was widely cultivated; each of its departments found devotees. The European languages were studied, and connections established between the literatures of the nations. Hardly a spiritual current runs through the middle ages without, in some way, affecting Jewish culture. It is the irony of history that puts among the forty proscribers of the Talmud assembled at Paris in the thirteenth century the Dominican Albertus Magnus, who, in his successful efforts to divert scholastic philosophy into new channels, depended entirely upon the writings and translations of the very Jews he was helping to persecute. Schoolmen were too little conversant with Greek to read Aristotle in the original, and so had to content themselves with accepting the Judæo-Arabic construction put upon the Greek sage's teachings.

Besides acting as intermediaries, Jews made original contributions to scholastic philosophy. For instance, Maimonides, the first to reconcile Aristotle's teachings with biblical theology, was the originator of the method adopted by schoolmen in the case of Aristotelian principles at variance with their dogmas. Frederick II., the liberal emperor, employed Jewish scholars and translators at his court; among them Jacob ben Abba-Mari ben Anatoli, to whom an annuity was paid for translating Aristotelian works. Michael Scotus, the imperial astrologer,

was his intimate friend. His contemporaries were chiefly popular philosophers or mystics, excepting only the prominent Provençal Jacob ben Machir, or Profatius Judæus, as he was called, a member of the Tibbon family of translators. His observations on the inclination of the earth's axis were used later by Copernicus as the basis of further investigations. He was a famous teacher at the Montpellier academy, which reminds me to mention that Jews were prominently identified with the founding and the success of the medical schools at Montpellier and Salerno, they, indeed, being almost the only physicians in all parts of the known world. Salerno, in turn, suggests Italy, where at that period translations were made from Latin into Hebrew. Hillel ben Samuel, for instance, the same who carried on a lively philosophic correspondence with another distinguished Jew, Maestro Isaac Gayo, the pope's physician, translated some of Thomas Aquinas's writings, Bruno di Lungoburgo's book on surgery, and various other works, from Latin into Hebrew.

These successors of the great intellects of the golden age of neo-Hebraic literature, thoroughly conversant with Arabic literature, busied themselves with rendering accessible to literary Europe the treasury of Indian and Greek fables. Their translations and compilations have peculiar value in the history of literary development. During the middle ages, when the memory of ancient literature had perished, they were the means of preserving the romances, fairy tales, and fables that have descended,

by way of Spain and Arabia, from classical antiquity and the many-hued Oriental world to our modern literatures. Between the eleventh and the thirteenth century, the foundations were laid for our narrative literature, demonstrating the importance of delight in fable lore, stories of travel, and all sorts of narratives, for to it we owe the creation of new and the transformation of old, literary forms.

In Germany at that time, a Jewish minnesinger and strolling minstrel, Süsskind von Trimberg, went up and down the land, from castle to castle, with the poets' guild; while Santob di Carrion, a Jewish troubadour, ventured to impart counsel and moral lessons to the Castilian king Don Pedro before his assembled people. A century later, another Jew, Samson Pnie, of Strasburg, lent his assistance to the two German poets at work upon the continuation of *Parzival*. The historians of German literature have not laid sufficient stress upon the share of the Jews, heavily oppressed and persecuted though they were, in the creation of national epics and romances of chivalry from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century. German Jews, being more than is generally recognized diligent readers of the poets, were well acquainted with the drift of mediæval poetry, and to this familiarity a new department of Jewish literature owed its rise and development. It is said that a Hebrew version of the Arthurian cycle was made as early as the thirteenth century, and at the end of the period we run across epic poems on Bible characters, composed in the *Nibelungen* metre, in imitation of old German legend lore and national poetry.

If German Jews found heart for literary interests, it may be assumed as a matter of course that Spanish and Provençal Jews participated in the advancement of their respective national literatures and in Troubadour poetry. In these countries, too, the new taste for popular literature, especially in the form of fables, was made to serve moral ends. A Jew, Berachya ben Natronai, was the precursor of Marie de France, the famous French fabulist, and La Fontaine and Lessing are indebted to him for some of their material. As in the case of Aristotelian philosophy and of Greek and Arabic medical science, Jews assumed the rôle of mediators in the transmission of fables. Indian fables reached their Arabic guise either directly or by way of Persian and Greek; thence they passed into Hebrew and Latin translations, and through these last forms became the property of the European languages. For instance, the Hebrew translation of the old Sanskrit fox fables was the one of greatest service in literary evolution. The translator of the fox fables is credited also with the translation of the romance of "The Seven Wise Masters," under the title *Mishlé Sandabar*. These two works gave the impetus to a great series in Occidental literature, and it seems altogether probable that Europe's first acquaintance with them dates from their Hebrew translation.

In Arabic poetry, too, many a Jew deservedly attained to celebrity. Abraham ibn Sahl won such renown that the Arabs, notorious for parsimony, gave ten gold pieces for one of his songs. Other

poets have come down to us by name, and Joseph Ezobi, whom Reuchlin calls *Judæorum poeta dulcissimus*, went so far as to extol Arabic beyond Hebrew poetry. He was the first to pronounce the dictum famous in Buffon's repetition: "The style is the man himself." Provence, the land of song, produced Kalonymos ben Kalonymos (Maestro Calo), known to his brethren in faith not only as a poet, but also as a scholar, whose Hebrew translations from the Arabic are of most important works on philosophy, medicine, and mathematics. As Anatoli had worked under Emperor Frederick II., so Kalonymos was attached to Robert of Naples, patron of Jewish scholars. At the same time with the Spanish and the German minstrel, there flourished in Rome Immanuel ben Solomon, the friend of Dante, upon whose death he wrote an Italian sonnet, and whose *Divina Commedia* inspired a part of his poetical works also describing a visit to paradise and hell.

With the assiduous cultivation of romantic poetry, which was gradually usurping the place of moral romances and novels, grew the importance of Oriental legends and traditions, so pregnant with literary suggestions. This is attested by the use made of the Hebrew translation of Indian fables mentioned before, and of the famous collection of tales, the *Disciplina clericalis* by the baptized Jew Petrus Alphonsus. The Jews naturally introduced many of their own peculiar traditions, and thus can be explained the presence of tales from the Talmud and the Midrash in our modern fairy tale books.

It is necessary to note again that the Jews in turn submitted to the influence of foreign literatures. Immanuel Romi, for example, at his best, is an exponent of Provençal versification and scholastic philosophy, while his lapses testify to the self-complacency and levity characteristic of the times. Yehuda Romano, one of his contemporaries, is said to have been teacher to the king of Naples. He was the first Jew to attain to a critical appreciation of the vagaries of scholasticism, but his claim to mention rests upon his translations from the Latin.

As Jews assisted at the birth of Arabic, French, and German, so they have a share in the beginnings of Spanish literature. Jews must be credited with the first "Chronicle of the Cid," with the romance, *Comte Lyonnais*, *Palanus*, with the first collection of tales, the first chess poems, and the first troubadour songs. Again, the oldest collection of the last into a *cancionera* was made by the Jew Juan Alfonso de Bæna.

Even distant Persia has proofs to show of Jewish ability and energy in those days. One Jew composed an epic on a biblical subject in the Persian language, another translated the Psalms into the vernacular.

The most prominent Jewish exponent of philosophy in this age of strenuous interest in metaphysical speculations and contests was Levi ben Gerson (Leon di Bannolas), theologian, scientist, physician, and astronomer. One of his ancestors, Gerson ben Solomon, had written a work typical of the state of

the natural sciences in his day. Levi ben Gerson's chief work became famous not among Jews alone. It was referred to in words of praise by Pico della Mirandola, Reuchlin, Kepler, and other Christian thinkers. He was the inventor of an astronomical instrument, a description of which was translated into Latin at the express command of Pope Clement VI., and carefully studied by Kepler. Besides, Levi ben Gerson was the author of an arithmetical work. In those days, in fact up to the seventeenth century, there was but a faint dividing line between astronomy and mathematics, as between medicine and natural history. John of Seville was a notable mathematician, the compiler of a practical arithmetic, the first to make mention of decimal fractions, which possibly may have been his invention, and in the *Zohar*, the text-book of mediæval Jewish mysticism, which appeared centuries before Copernicus's time, the cause of the succession of day and night is stated to be the earth's revolution on its axis.

In this great translation period scarcely a single branch of human science escaped the mental avidity of Jews. They found worthy of translation such essays as "Rules for the Shoeing and Care of Horses in Royal Stables" and "The Art of Carving and Serving at Princely Boards." Translations of works on scholasticism now took rank beside those from Greek and Arabic philosophers, and to translations from the Arabic into Hebrew were added translations from and into Latin, or even into the

vernacular idiom wherever literary forms had developed. The bold assertion can be made good that not a single prominent work of ancient science was left untranslated. On the other hand it is hard to speculate what would have been the fate of these treasures of antiquity without Jewish intermediation. Doubtless an important factor in the work was the encouragement given Jewish scholars by enlightened rulers, such as Emperor Frederick II., Charles and Robert of Anjou, Jayme I. of Aragon, and Alfonso X. of Castile, and by popes, and private patrons of learning. Mention has been made of Jewish contributions to the work of the medical schools of Montpellier and Salerno. Under Jayme I. Christian and Jewish savants of Barcelona worked together harmoniously to promote the cause of civilization and culture in their native land. The first to use the Catalan dialect for literary purposes was the Jew Yehuda ben Astruc, and under Alfonso (X.) the Wise, Jews again attained to prominence in the king's favorite science of astronomy. The Alfonsine Tables were chiefly the work of Isaac ibn Sid, a Toledo *chazan* (precentor). In general, the results reached by Jewish scholarship at Alfonso's court were of the utmost importance, having been largely instrumental in establishing in the age of Tycho de Brahe and Kepler the fundamental principles of astronomy and a correct view of the orbits of the heavenly bodies. Equal suggestiveness characterizes Jewish research in mathematics, a science to which, rising above the level of intermediaries and

translators, Jews made original contributions of importance, the first being Isaac Israeli's "The Foundation of the Universe." Basing his observations on Maimuni's and Abraham ben Chiya's statement of the sphericity of the earth, Israeli showed that the heavenly bodies do not seem to occupy the place in which they would appear to an observer at the centre of the earth, and that the two positions differ by a certain angle, since known as parallax in the terminology of science. To Judah Hakohen, a scholar in correspondence with Alfonso the Wise, is ascribed the arrangement of the stars in forty-eight constellations, and to another Jew, Esthori Hafarchi, we owe the first topographical description of Palestine, whither he emigrated when the Jews were expelled from France by Philip the Fair.

Meanwhile the condition of the Jews, viewed from without and from within, had become most pitiable. The Kabbala lured into her charmed circle the strongest Jewish minds. Scientific aspirations seemed completely extinguished. Even the study of the Talmud was abandoning simple, undistorted methods of interpretation, and espousing the hair-splitting dialectics of the northern French school. Synagogue poetry was languishing, and general culture found no votaries among Jews. Occasionally only the religious disputations between Jews and Christians induced some few to court acquaintance with secular branches of learning. In the fourteenth century Chasdaï Crescas was the only philosopher with an original system, which in its arguments on

free will and the nature of God anticipated the views of one greater than himself, who, however, had a different purpose in view. That later and greater philosopher, to whom the world is indebted for the evangel of modern life, was likewise a Jew, a descendant of Spanish-Jewish fugitives. His name is Baruch Spinoza.

However sad their fortunes, the literature of the Jews never entirely eschewed the consideration of subjects of general interest. This receives curious confirmation from the re-introduction of Solomon Gabirol's peculiar views into Jewish religious philosophy, by way of Christian scholasticism, as formulated especially by Thomas Aquinas, the *Doctor angelicus*.

The Renaissance and the humanistic movement also reveal Jewish influences at work. The spirit of liberty abroad in the earth passed through the halls of Israel, clearing the path thenceforth to be trodden by men. Again the learned were compelled to engage the good offices of the Jews, the custodians of biblical antiquity. The invention of the printing press acted as a wonderful stimulus to the development of Jewish literature. The first products of the new machine were Hebrew works issued in Italy and Spain. Among the promoters of the Renaissance, and one of the most thorough students of religious-philosophical systems, was Elias del Medigo, the friend of Pico della Mirandola, and the umpire chosen by the quarrelling factions in the University of Padua. John Reuchlin, chief of the humanists,

was taught Hebrew by Obadiah Sforno, a *savant* of profound scholarship, who dedicated his "Commentary on Ecclesiastes" to Henry II. of France. Abraham de Balmes was a teacher at the universities of Padua and Salerno, and physician in ordinary to Cardinal Dominico Grimani. The Kabbala was made accessible to the heroes of the Renaissance by Jochanan Alemanno, of Mantua, and there is pathos in the urgency with which Reuchlin entreats Jacob Margoles, rabbi of Nuremberg, to send him Kabbalistic writings in addition to those in his possession. Reuchlin's good offices to the Jews—his defense of them against the attacks of obscurantists—are a matter of general knowledge. Among the teachers of the humanists who revealed to them the treasures of biblical literature the most prominent was Elias Levita, the introducer, through his disciples Sebastian Münster and Paul Fagius, of Hebrew studies into Germany. He may be accounted a true humanist, a genuine exponent of the Renaissance. His Jewish coadjutors were Judah Abrabanel (Leo Hebræus), whose chief work was *Dialoghi di Amore*, an exposition of the Neoplatonism then current in Italy; Jacob Mantino, physician to Pope Paul III.; Bonet di Lattes, known as a writer on astronomical subjects, and the inventor of an astronomical instrument; and a number of others.

While in Italy the Spanish-Jewish exiles fell into line in the Renaissance movement, the large numbers of them that sought refuge in Portugal turned their attention chiefly to astronomical research and

to voyages of discovery and adventure, the national enterprises of their protectors. João II. employed Jews in investigations tending to make reasonably safe the voyages, on trackless seas, under unknown skies, for the discovery of long and ardently sought passages to distant lands. In his commission charged with the construction of an instrument to indicate accurately the course of a vessel, the German knight Martin Behaim was assisted by Jews—astronomers, metaphysicians, and physicians—chief among them Joseph Vecinho, distinguished for his part in the designing of the artificial globe, and Pedro di Carvallho, navigator, whose claim to praise rests upon his improvement of Leib's *Astrologium*, and to censure, upon his abetment of the king when he refused the request of the bold Genoese Columbus to fit out a squadron for the discovery of wholly unknown lands. But when Columbus's plans found long deferred realization in Spain, a Jewish youth, Luis de Torres, embarked among the ninety adventurers who accompanied him. Vasco da Gama likewise was aided in his search for a waterway to the Indies by a Jew, the pilot Gaspar, the same who later set down in writing the scientific results of the voyage, and two Jews were despatched to explore the coasts of the Red Sea and the island of Ormus in the Persian Gulf. Again, Vasco da Gama's plans were in part made with the valuable assistance of a Jew, a profound scholar, Abraham Zacuto, sometime professor of astronomy at the University of Salamanca, and after the banishment of Jews from Spain,

astronomer and chronographer to Manuel the Great, of Portugal. It was he that advised the king to send out Da Gama's expedition, and from the first the explorer was supported by his counsel and scientific knowledge.

Meritorious achievements, all of them, but they did not shield the Jews against impending banishment. The exiles found asylums in Italy and Holland, and in each country they at once projected themselves into the predominant intellectual movement. A physician, Abraham Portaleone, distinguished himself on the field of antiquarian research; another, David d'Ascoli, wrote a defense of Jews; and a third, David de Pomis, a defense of Jewish physicians. The most famous was Amatus Lusitanus, one of whose important discoveries is said to have brought him close up to that of the circulation of the blood. Before the banishment of Jews from Spain took effect, Antonio di Moro, a Jewish peddler of Cordova, flourished as the last of Spanish troubadours, and Rodrigo da Cota, a neo-Christian of Seville, as the first of Spanish dramatists, the supposed author of *Celestina*, one of the most celebrated of old Spanish dramatic compositions.

The proscribed, in the guise of Marranos, and under the hospitable shelter of their new homes, could not be banished from literary Spain, even in its newest departures. Indeed, for a long time Spanish and Italian literatures were brought into contact with each other only through the instrumentality of Jews. Not quite half a century after the expulsion

of Jews from Portugal and their settlement in Italy, a Jew, Solomon Usque, made a Spanish translation of Petrarch (1567), dedicated to Alessandro Farnese, duke of Parma, and wrote Italian odes, dedicated to Cardinal Borromeo.

At the zenith of the Renaissance, Jews won renown as Italian poets, and did valiant work as translators from Latin into Hebrew and Italian. In the later days of the movement, in the Reformation period, illustrious Christian scholars studied Hebrew under Jewish tutorship, and gave it a place on the curriculum of the universities. Luther himself submitted to rabbinical guidance in his biblical studies.

In great numbers the Spanish exiles turned to Turkey, where numerous new communities rapidly arose. There, too, in Constantinople and elsewhere, Jews, like Elias Mizrachi and Elias Kapsali, were the first to pursue scientific research.

We have now reached the days of deepest misery for Judaism. Yet, in the face of unrelenting oppression, Jews win places of esteem as diplomats, custodians and advocates of important interests at royal courts. From the earliest period of their history, Jews manifested special talent for the arts of diplomacy. In the Arabic-Spanish period they exercised great political influence upon Mohammedan caliphs. The Fatimide and Omayyad dynasties employed Jewish representatives and ministers, Samuel ibn Nagdela, for instance, being grand vizir of the caliph of Granada. Christian sovereigns also valued their services: as is well known, Charlemagne sent a Jew-

ish ambassador to Haroun al Rashid; Pope Alexander III. appointed Yechiel ben Abraham as minister of finance; and so late as in the fifteenth century the wise statesman Isaac Abrabanel was minister to Alfonso V., of Portugal, and, wonderful to relate, for eight years to Ferdinand and Isabella, of Spain. At this time Jewish literature was blessed with a patron in the person of Joseph Nasi, duke of Naxos, whom, it is said, Sultan Selim II. wished to crown king of Cyprus. His rival was Solomon Ashkenazi, Turkish ambassador to the Venetian republic, who exercised decisive influence upon the election of a Polish king. And this is not the end of the roll of Jewish diplomats and ministers.

Unfortunately, the Kabbala, whose spell was cast about even the most vigorous of Jewish minds, was the leading intellectual current of those sad days, the prevailing misery but serving to render her allurements more fascinating. But in the hands of such men as Abraham Herrera, who influenced Benedict Spinoza, even Kabbalistic studies were informed with a scientific spirit, and brought into connection with Neoplatonic philosophy.

Mention of Spinoza suggests Holland where Jews were kindly received, and shortly after their arrival they interested themselves in the philosophical pursuits in vogue. The best index to their position in Holland is furnished by Manasseh ben Israel's prominent rôle in the politics and the literary ventures of Amsterdam, and by his negotiations with Oliver Cromwell. We may pardon the pride which

made him say, "I have enjoyed the friendship of the wisest and the best of Europe." Uriel Acosta and Baruch Spinoza, though children of the Amsterdam *Judengasse*, were ardent patriots.

The last great Spanish poet was Antonio Enrique de Gomez, the Jewish Calderon, burnt in effigy at Seville; while the last Portuguese poet of note was Antonio Jose de Silva, who perished at the stake for his faith, leaving his dramas as a precious possession to Portuguese literature.

Even in the dreariest days of decadence, when the study of the Talmud seemed to engross their attention, Jews prosecuted scientific inquiries, as witness Moses Isserles's translation of *Theorica*, an astronomical treatise by Peurbach, the Vienna humanist.

With the migration of Jews eastward, *Juden-deutsch*, a Jewish-German dialect, with its literature, was introduced into Slavic countries. It is a fact not generally known that this jargon is the depository of certain Middle High German expressions and elements no longer used in the modern German, and that philologists are forced to resort to the study of the Polish-Jewish patois to reconstruct the old idiom. In 1523, the year of Luther's Pentateuch translation, a Jewish-German Bible dictionary was published at Cracow, and in 1540 appeared the first Jewish-German translation of the Pentateuch. The Germans strongly influenced the popular literature of the Jews. The two nationalities seized the same subjects, often imitating the same models, or using the same translations. The German "Till

Eulenspiegel" was printed in 1500, the Jewish-German in 1600. Besides incorporating German folklore, Jewish-German writings borrowed from German romances, assimilated foreign literatures, did not neglect the traditions of the Jews themselves, and embraced even folk-songs, some of which have perpetuated themselves until the modern era.

Mention of the well-known fact that the Hebrew studies prosecuted by Christians in the eighteenth century were carried on under Jewish influence brings us to the threshold of the modern era, the period of the Jewish Renaissance. Here we are on well-worn ground. Since Jews have been permitted to enter at will upon the multifarious pursuits growing out of modern culture, their importance as factors of civilization is universally acknowledged, and it would be wearisome, and would far transgress the limits of a lecture, to enumerate their achievements.

In trying to show what share the Jew has had in the world's civilization, I have naturally concerned myself chiefly with literature, for literature is the mirror of culture. It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that the Jew has been inactive in other spheres. His contributions, for instance, to the modern development of international commerce, cannot be overlooked. Commerce in its modern extension was the creation of the mercantile republics of mediæval Italy—Venice, Florence, Genoa, and Pisa—and in them Jews determined and regulated its course. When Ravenna contemplated a union with Venice, and formulated the conditions for the

alliance, one of them was the demand that rich Jews be sent thither to open a bank for the relief of distress. Jews were the first to obtain the privilege of establishing banks in the Italian cities, and the first to discover the advantages of a system of checks and bills of exchange, of unique value in the development of modern commerce.

Even in art, a sphere from which their rigorous laws might seem to have the effect of banishing them, they were not wholly inactive. They always numbered among themselves handicraftsmen. In Venice, in the sixteenth century, we find celebrated Jewish wood engravers. Jacob Weil's rules for slaughtering were published with vignettes by Hans Holbein, and one of Manasseh ben Israel's works was adorned with a frontispiece by Rembrandt. In our own generation Jews have won fame as painters and sculptors, while music has been their staunch companion, deserting them not even in the darkest days of the Ghetto.

These certainly are abundant proofs that the Jew has a share in all the phases and stages of culture, from its first germs unto its latest complex development—a consoling, elevating reflection. A learned historian of literature, a Christian, in discussing this subject, was prompted to say: "Our first knowledge of philosophy, botany, astronomy, and cosmography, as well as the grammar of the holy language and the results of biblical study, we owe primarily to Jews." Another historian, also a Christian, closes a review of Jewish national traits with the words: "Looking

back over the course of history, we find that in the gloom, bareness, and intellectual sloth of the middle ages, Jews maintained a rational system of agriculture, and built up international commerce, upon which rests the well-being of the nations."

Truly, there are reasons for pride on our part, but no less do great obligations devolve upon us. I cannot refrain from exhortation. In justice we should confess that Jews drew their love of learning and ability to advance the work of civilization from Jewish writings. Furthermore, it is a fact that these Jewish writings no longer excite the interest, or claim the devotion of Jews. I maintain that it is the duty of the members of our Order to take this neglected, lightly esteemed literature under their protection, and secure for it the appreciation and encouragement that are the offspring of knowledge.

Modern Judaism presents a curious spectacle. The tiniest of national groups in Eastern Europe, conceiving the idea of establishing its independence, proceeds forthwith to create a literature, if need be, inventing and forging. Judaism possesses countless treasures of inestimable worth, amassed by research and experience in the course of thousands of years, and her latter-day children brush them aside with indifference, even with scorn, leaving it to the sons of the stranger, yea, their adversaries, to gather and cherish them.

When Goethe in his old age conceived and outlined a scheme of universal literature, the first place was assigned to Jewish literature. In his pantheon

of the world's poetry, the first tone uttered was to be that of "David's royal song and harp." But, in general, Jewish literature is still looked upon as the Cinderella of the world's literatures. Surely, the day will come when justice will be done, Cinderella's claim be acknowledged equal to that of her royal sisters, and together they will enter the spacious halls of the magnificent palace of literature.

Among the prayers prescribed for the Day of Atonement is one of subordinate importance which affects me most solemnly. When the shadows of evening lengthen, and the light of the sun wanes, the Jew reads the *Neilah* service with fervor, as though he would "burst open the portals of heaven with his tears," and the inmost depths of my nature are stirred with melancholy pride by the prayer of the pious Jew. He supplicates not for his house and his family, not for Zion dismantled, not for the restoration of the Temple, not for the advent of the Messiah, not for respite from suffering. All his sighs and hopes, all his yearning and aspiration, are concentrated in the one thought: "Our splendor and our glory have departed, our treasures have been snatched from us; there remains nothing to us but this Law alone." If this is true; if naught else is left of our former state; if this Law, this science, this literature, are our sole treasure and best inheritance, then let us cherish and cultivate them so as to have a legacy to bequeath to our children to stand them in good stead against the coming of the *Neilah* of humanity, the day when brethren will "dwell together in unity."

Perhaps that day is not far distant. Methinks I hear the rustling of a new springtide of humanity; methinks I discern the morning flush of new world-stirring ideas, and before my mind's eye rises a bridge, over which pass all the nations of the earth, Israel in their midst, holding aloft his ensign with the inscription, "The Lord is my banner!"—the one which he bore on every battlefield of thought, and which was never suffered to fall into the enemy's hand. It is a mighty procession moving onward and upward to a glorious goal: "Humanity, Liberty, Love!"